THE
WHITE SLAVE;
OR,
THE RUSSIAN PEASANT GIRL.

VOL. III.

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"REVELATIONS IN RUSSIA."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE WHITE SLAVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE manor house of the Bialoe Darevnia had been hastily prepared to receive its owner.

It stood at the extremity of the village; but although the chief place of residence on an estate as large and populous as a German principality, it bore no resemblance, except in magnitude, either to the castles of Germany, or the chateaux of France, or the Italian villas, or the old mansion houses and modern country seats of Britain.

It was built up of logs and pine, whose interstices were caulked with moss; and though it might have been rendered picturesque in the Swiss cottage style, the taste of the architect had preferred building after a classic model, with a peristyle and columns, all of planed deal wood, painted, and to match which, the rough walls had been covered with planks—intended to simulate the smoothness and colour of a surface of stone—but which warping here and there, and stained by the rusty nails which fastened them, were guiltless of deceiving.

There was the desolate bleakness of a French

chateau without its feudal grandeur, the homely meanness of Holland without its comfort and neatness.

No grounds or park surrounded the building, it stood aloof, in the centre of the widest part of the clearing in which the village was situated, and this in the estimation of whoever built it, had decided the eligibility of site.

The forest which had receded before the axe and plough, but which was still on every side in sight, formed a beautiful and natural park, a green lawn—here and there indeed a little marshy—being scattered over with clumps of oak, and birch, and pine. Yet as far as possible removed from this, the Lord's mansion had been raised by Russian taste in the midst of negligently cultivated fields, divided by rugged fences of rudely splintered fir.

The prevalence of the wild forest all over the northern and middle governments of Russia, may, however, account for this distaste of its inhabitants for trees, which leads them to prefer the open space, the most desolate, to the spot the most luxuriously timbered, since from similar causes it is said to be in some measure entertained throughout North America.

Several hundred of the villagers selected by the steward were and had been for the last two days lounging in the yard.

The women in their gayest attire carried aprons full of flowers, which were abundant if not very choice, because only such as the woods

furnished, Johann having abandoned the care of the only ornamental garden to his son Hans, who had rooted up the rose trees to plant raspberry bushes, and dug up the flowers to sow cabbages. The steward himself was in holiday array, as well as his wife and family.

Trautchen, his daughter, incessantly occupied at the glass, was sporting all her finery, as if with some latent hope of captivating either the Lord or some of his noble guests—an imagination so preposterous with a glass before her as only to be accounted for by the supposition of some extraordinary treachery in her visual organs and which indeed would have been quite in accordance with their habitually deceitful character, since their glances always seemed directed on you when in reality peering into the face of your neighbour.

Her brother Hans was dressed in a very short tailed coat of silver grey, his broad face expanded grinningly into a wider breadth beneath his long dense crop of flaxen hair, as he surveyed the collation prepared for the expected guests ; and the flaxen hair pyramidally surmounted by a little green cloth cap of truly teutonic fashion and exiguity, with which his silvery-mounted Sunday meerschaum correctly harmonised.

Indeed, perhaps Trautchen and Hans were of all the festive party the most joyous at heart, Trautchen in her very fallacious illusions, and Hans in the anticipation, which he had already

partially realised of profiting by the expected confusion to increase his private store of dainties, for he had already succeeded in carrying off, under the lynx eyes of the Frau Sauer, a smoked goose, a handful of almonds, and a pot of custard.

Johann had prepared an exhibition of fireworks, manufactured under his own directions, and an illumination of glasses coloured with tinted paper, and which was to be of peculiar brilliancy on account of a method of preparing the wicks of his own invention.

Though Johann was chiefly influenced by the wish of receiving his master (at his master's own expense) with a warmth which might captivate his good-will, still in the midst of all his anxiety respecting the result of the Prince's visit on his fortunes, he was gratified at this opportunity of giving his blue-lights, rockets and ingenious lamps a fair trial, as he called it, for his wife's parsimony had never but once before allowed him to essay them during the last visit of the late Lord, and on this occasion the result had been marked but not satisfactory; for the wicks had spluttered and exploded, and the fireworks had gone off in an instantaneous flash, burning the fingers of the peasantry, an accident for which the benevolent Prince begged Johann to remember them, a recommendation which he obeyed to the letter, though not in the spirit in which it was given.

Johann had received some hint from the

steward, Dietrich, as to the differences between the character of the present and the late Prince: but still he thought it prudent, in the event of his being misinformed, to collect the most prosperous looking of his slaves to receive him.

Most of the moujiks in their best summer grey caftans, with new red woollen sashes, in which were stuck their axes, looked sullen and suspicious, particularly the older men.

The Starost, the elder of the village, a grey bearded man of patriarchial aspect was leaning against the rail, surrounded by a group who were taking a sort of camp dinner, consisting of a prodigious hunk of the truffle-coloured alumny flavoured rye-bread, on which was scattered a thick layer of salt.

"Never," said the elder shaking his head, "does any good come of change: we *do* live now at least, and there is corn stacked up so that we can never want grain at seed time. We should always remember, if a hungry Lord comes as well as a hungry steward that we live where corn will fetch some price in the market, so that we may be rationed down to the last crust; and then if a crop fails, I know the misery, for I have seen it."

"Not here!" said several voices.

"No, not here; I was born in another village, in a rich corn country; but the Baron shaved every thing from the soil. A year of famine came—we fed on the bark of trees till starvation scattered us abroad over the face

of the country. Some of us were brought back, some made soldiers and crown serfs, and others enticed by the Barons of prosperous estates, as I was here. The grandfather of Vasili there had just died; I was put on to his passport, and so, though he is older than I, *he* is my grandson, and as the old man died at seventy, and I am sixty now, and that it happened forty years ago, I am reckoned to be a hundred and ten years old."

At this moment a scout informed the steward that a carriage was discernible. The peasantry were hastily marshalled in order. Johann, who was determined that they should look contented and happy, had recourse to the infallible means on which he had all along counted, of distributing a dram; and where the dram failed in its effect, he used his cane lustily to awaken to alacrity and cheerfulness some stubbornly sullen moujik.

"Philosophy and religion should teach you alike, my dear children, to show yourselves grateful to your Lord, the son of your late benevolent master, whose heart yearned towards you, like my own."

The carriage drew up; but instead of being the Lord, it was the Lord's cook and his assistant, who very ruthlessly and contemptuously put the Frau Sauer's collation to the rout, Hans hovering round the retreating dishes like the Cossacks on the rear of the *Grande Armée*, after the burning of Moscow.

But as at least the hour of arrival was known with some precision, the *joyous* villagers were marshalled in the most appropriate order.

To the infinite delight of the exulting Trautchen, Nadeshta was placed amongst the comely peasant girls who were to scatter flowers before their expected master, for Johann had learned by Dietrich's last communication the profound disgrace into which Mattheus had fallen.

Nadeshta's spirit rebelled for a moment; and then, absorbed in the thought of at length seeing her brother, she yielded with a sigh. Alas! the group of village maidens amongst whom she took her place, on whom she had heaped so many kindnesses when comparatively high and happy, all regarded her degradation with undisguised and insolent satisfaction.

At length another cloud of dust came rolling on; and then there emerged dimly from it a team of post-horses, who seemed to knead it with their feet, adding this pleasant labour to that of dragging the Prince's carriage after them.

Johann remarked with some surprize that Isaakoff's valet was seated in the carriage beside him, whilst his friend occupied the rumble.

It was true that both he and his servant seemed a little elevated with wine, for when they alighted, and the steward, with a bow which brought him into an attitude thoroughly toad-like, offered at once his homage

and duty, and presented his wife and daughter, they both—master and man—turned aside to ogle the four-and-twenty village maidens, heedless alike of the sweetly acid smile into which Frau Sauer had relaxed, and of the graces of her daughter. Their eyes were at once arrested by the sight of Nadeshta, who shone amidst the group like a bright gem in a heap of pebbles, or a rich pearl amongst incrusted shells, and whose tall and graceful figure rose, contrasting with the ignoble crowd, like a stately swan surrounded by a flock of wild fowl.

The lacquey, or at least he who wore the caped and laced livery cloak, started back in some astonishment; while the Prince, without deigning any answer to the address of his steward, asked him whether that was not the sister of Mattheus?

"Exactly, my most excellent and high-born master!"

"There then is your sister!" said the Prince.

The servitor staggered for an instant, and then Nadeshta—who at this joyful announcement had recognized her brother—opening her arms with a wild exclamation of delight, he threw aside his cloak and rushed into them.

But as he threw his cloak aside, Johann had noticed that he was dressed as fashionably as his master, and arguing from all he saw, that he had been induced into some fatal error respecting the disgrace into which Mattheus was said to have fallen, he was officious in

leading the brother and sister into the mansion out of the gaze of the crowd.

"And here," said the Prince, "is my friend, the Count. No one assists him to alight! My dear Count, you look pale and faint, and if you grind your teeth together thus, you will spoil the enamel, or bring on a lock jaw perhaps," and so saying, he seized him vigorously by the arm, as if to support him.

"Look, my dear friend!" he continued, grinning in his face with infernal malice. "Look, and refresh yourself with the touching spectacle of the meeting of a long parted sister and brother!"

But as the Prince spoke, the individual whom he addressed had fixed his eyes intently on the delighted couple; the blood had fled from his white and compressed lips, and the nails seemed entering into the palms of his nervously contracting hands.

But when he saw Nadeshta just mounting the steps, pause, and, again twine her fair arms round her brother's neck, he made a sudden bound as if to dash forward; but the Prince holding up his finger, just said "Beware!" and then when he seemed magically to have controlled his victim's terrible emotion, he looked into his face and laughed a long, shrill, fiend-like laugh, which grated even on the ears of Johann. Need the reader be told that Count Horace, as he proposed, had changed places with Mattheus?

"Dearest Mattvei! my own, own brother!" said Nadeshta.

"I have forgotten my Russ!" stammered out Horace; for although flushed with wine and prepared for the adventure, his confidence was gone. He felt bewildered and doubtful of his senses; for in the slave girl he was struck to find the form, the features, and expression of that portrait in Anna's boudoir, which had so strangely impressed itself upon his recollection.

"Do I dream," thought he, "or am I intoxicated with the wine and heat?" But as he looked again, the more attentively and coolly he examined the peasant girl, the more remarkable appeared her likeness—in all but costume—to the lady in that singular painting.

"Dearest Mattvei," said Nadeshta, "do we then once more meet again? Oh! for years since I have dreamed of you! My only consolation has been the perusal of your letters, and the consciousness of your affection; and now do I at length behold you? Let me kiss those eyes, so like my mother's, and that brow which was so much fairer when we parted, and those lips which were then as smooth as mine are now! You are darker—very, very much darker altogether, my own brother—but let me look at you and admire you, and note how handsome you have grown; and oh! how one can see that your time has not been spent in a land of slaves. What a noble figure! what an air of haughty independence! How like those gallant

men of the west you have become—the chivalrous, the brave, the wise, the good, the truthful! But, dear Mattvei, why do you repulse my kisses? Why, do you blush at a fond sister's praises? It is surely not your poor Nadeshta's slave dress shames you; for since you came on such terms with the Lord, you have, I trust, obtained your freedom?"

Never had Horace felt so utterly ashamed of himself as in the perfidious deceit which he was so wantonly practising; but his resolution was rapidly taken. He nodded assent, and pressing her hand, seemed speechless with emotion.

"Oh!" said Nadeshta clasping her hands and looking up her gratitude. "Heaven be praised! then he is free at last."

"Oh! my brother," she continued surveying him with an intense affection and pride, "so kind, and so brave, and so beautiful—and free!—And now you will obtain the freedom of your poor Nadeshta, and bear her with you away to foreign lands, far from the scenes of our ignominy, where you go to carve your fortune—far from this land of petty tyrants, and of cringing slaves, and of men false, hollow, and servile—away to the historic climes of song and chivalry, and liberty, and inspiration. Is it not so, my Mattvei?"

Again Horace nodded an assent—and again she clasped him in her arms; and never did the brow of a young girl burn with fevered blushes, like that of the gay and somewhat licentious

Count, when thus placed in the very situation he had sought so eagerly.

"But come," said Nadeshta, leading him by the hand, "we shall be interrupted here—let us go. Is not your heart too full to speak, Mattvei, as mine has been so often with grief?—But it is not so now, for it is overflowing with its joy."

Yet nevertheless as she conducted him by the hand, some two hundred paces, a sad reflection stole across her countenance like a cloud over the mid-day sunlight.

They were approaching the place of many groves, and whilst Horace was gathering heart to speak out and explain the deception he had practised, she led him to a shady corner of the churchyard, where an old wooden cross rose up from the rank grass. There were withering on it some of the pale wood violets of autumn, emblematic of hope, and a chain of the stalks of the dandelion, such as children are fond of weaving, and which the slave girl had musingly put together, both sadly significative of her condition and her prospects.

On this spot, saying "It is here, Mattvei," she kneeled, her eyes filling with tears; and Horace felt intuitively that he was treading on the grave of a mother!

He too had a mother once—fondly loved and mouldering in the cold earth now; and for him there was no human association so sacred.

It acted on him with the suddenness of an exorcism;—he felt that it was sacrilege to stand

upon that holy soil in his deceit: so falling on his knees he said,

"Nadeshta, forgive me! I have basely deceived you! I am a foreigner—a stranger—not your brother: but by the clay which is mouldering beneath our feet, and by the spirit which looks down upon us from above, I will be to you a brother."

"What, not my brother! not Mattvei!" exclaimed Nadeshta starting wildly up, and pushing back the hair from his forehead to look for the scar which should have marked his skull with its deep indentation; and then withdrawing her hand with a shriek of loathing and of horror.

"Hear me," said Horace.

"Oh how base! how infamous!" said Nadeshta—her eye flashing with indignation and her cheek burning with shame—"May plague spots grow from the contact of my lips!—May heaven and earth avenge this foul, unholy outrage! Oh! shame and infamy to insult the weak, the lonely, and the orphan!" and as she spoke, upraising her tall figure, and stretching out her hand in denunciation, she looked a magnificent image of the angry Pythoness: but this excitement only lasted for an instant, and was followed by quick re-action—the colour fled from her cheek, the power from her limbs—she clasped the cross upon her mother's grave, for her support, and fell in that attitude senseless, saying in a voice of poignant misery:

"But who—but who may not insult the Slave-Girl?"

CHAPTER II.

WHEN a faint glimmering of reason dawned upon the mind of Blanche, in the midst of her fever and delirium, though she had no distinct recollection of anything, she felt a vague and oppressive sense of some undefined calamity. Where was Mattheus? She stretched out her hand and grasped the arm of an old, withered, toothless crone, who, muttering in a strange language, was lifting up a coarse stone pipkin, making sign for her to drink. The apartment—in which the patient was stretched on a mattrass stuffed with the lime-bark matting—was only a few feet square. A small open window let in a current of air; and in the corner were piles of rusty old iron, old clothes, and other frippery.

Nothing could be more sordid than the aspect of the place. A door, which just then happened to be open, gave, through a long, dark, narrow passage, a distant vista of a small shop, piled up with chains and heaps of rusty nails, and bars, and rods of iron in sheaves and bundles.

She turned on her mattrass; and lo! on the other side of her bed, there sat a stern-featured

man, with long and grizzly beard, who looked into her face, and read aloud in a monotonous tone from a heavy old tome, printed in bold strange characters.

There was no sympathy either in his cold, hard eye, or in his voice; and if she could have understood the passages he was reading from the Scriptures, in the obsolete Sclavonic, she would have found little that was consolatory in his lugubrious selections.

The heart of the stern, old sectarian was long since dead and withered to all human feelings; and if his language had been intelligible to her, she would have been rather startled than soothed on her sick-bed by his quotation of those parts of Holy Writ, which referred only to approaching death, and which he used not so as to smooth the passage of the departing soul by familiarizing it with its aspect, but to add to its terrors by mingling with it all that seemed to imply a doubt of the salvation of those not pre-elected. Herein seeking his words in the eternal book, Ivan Petrovitch was giving utterance to his own gloomy thoughts and stern misgivings. But on the other hand, because he deemed it his duty—a duty of which he was even doubtful—he had taken to his miserable home, in the full delirium of a malignant fever, a Midianite woman, as he called her.

Ivan Petrovitch was miserably poor, because he despised all worldly wealth; and as one of the Starè Vertsi, was peculiarly subject to a persecution from which his poverty had chiefly shielded him; and yet, besides bringing the pestilence under

his roof, he exposed himself voluntarily to the wrath of the police by infringing two distinct laws which it endeavours to enforce with the utmost vigour.

In the first place, as sane policy demands in all countries, he had no right to receive into his house, without giving notice to the due authorities, a sick person in a contagious fever in a populous quarter. And in the next, by a general police law of Russian stringency and severity, no individual has a right to harbour another, even for one single night, without presenting the passport of his inmate to the police-office to be inscribed; and the penalty is enforced upon the housekeeper. For every night that he neglects to lay this information, there is a distinct fine: the police generally allow these to accumulate before they pounce upon the delinquent; and, as a man so poor as the old fanatic, would have been unable to pay it, he would have been punished by corporal chastisement, and incarceration doubly prolonged, on account of his being noted as a dissenter in the black-book of the police-office of his quarter.

But Ivan Petrovitch braved this danger as he braved the contagion. He tended the patient with unremitting attention, if with a stony, solemn indifference; and as his religious duties added to the scanty business of his store, and the hours of indispensable sleep occupied some portion of his time, he had engaged the old hag, a fellow-sectarian, to relieve him,. and to pay her the miserable pittance for this duty, three days in every week did the penury of Ivan Petrovitch oblige

him to abstain even from his coarse, habitual food.

Now this was one of those days of abstinence on which, as he said, "he drank the waters of the brook to satisfy the cravings of his body, and ate of the bread of eternal life to satisfy his soul."

"She is delirious again," muttered the crone. "It will be over soon. They will lay her in the earth before next Sunday, young and dainty as she is!"

"Thinkest thou so?" said the old man, shutting up his book, and casting up his eyes in pious ecstasy. "And thou shouldst know who watchest so many departing!—who better? Oh, Lord! when will it please thee to call thy weary servitor? Here goeth a sinful daughter of the sons of men, thy mercy only knoweth whither! And I, who am of thy elect, still tarry; whilst Abraham's bosom is ready to receive one of thy chosen people!"

Though Blanche was in so dangerous a condition, yet her host was too determined a predestinarian to resort to medicine, so that her malady was left entirely to nature. But this first lucid interval was of very short duration; for, bewildered by the scene around her, and by the stern aspect of her strange nurses, her brain speedily began again to wander.

At length the ravings of the sick woman having awakened the attention, and aroused the suspicion of his neighbours, Ivan Petrovitch, who was scrupulously true to the trust he had undertaken, resolved to remove her to a place of greater security. Now, none but a very few of the old man's persuasion could have been induced to undertake such a charge; and if they had been

willing to do so, those in the city could have found no means of concealment better than his own. —Beyond the walls of his dwelling, Ivan Petrovitch could only bethink him of one of his brethren, a brickmaker, quite as austere and fanatical as himself; but then the brickmaker had long since fallen away from the orthodox principles of the old faith, or at least was reputed to have done so, though, as it was to depart quite as widely from the hateful tenets of the dominant church, he was regarded rather as a schismatic than a heretic—rather as one of the elect who had strayed from the fold, than as one predestined to perdition. For his own part, the brickmaker still anxiously held out a hand to the uncompromising votaries of the faith from which he contended that he had not swerved, whilst they would neither listen to, nor discuss the obscure metaphysical abstractions in which his uncultivated mind had become entangled. But he was still anxious to conciliate them—persuaded that whenever he could prevail upon them to listen to him, he should convince—and he was just an enthusiast of their own stamp, who would set at defiance all inconvenience and danger in anything he undertook.

Anxious to oblige Ivan Petrovitch, he did agree to undertake the charge; and then, drawing forth a well-thumbed volume, he tried whether gratitude would not induce Ivan to listen.

"Brother Ivan Petrovitch, just listen to this one comment."

The stern, impracticable, old sectarian rose up abruptly:

"That book wants no comment."

"But hear me just explain according to the belief of our fathers."

"Fare thee well!" said the dealer in old iron; "I have no ears to lend thee: if it be old and true, then I know it; and if it be new, then be the curse of folly and of perdition on thy words!"

"They have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not!" said the brickmaker, as his visitor retired. But thus far these men knew each other, that, their word once passed, Ivan Petrovitch caused the wife of Mattheus to be committed to his charge, in the full confidence that she would nevertheless be received; and the other received her almost plague-stricken, as she might be said to be.

"The Lord has sent me the pestilence!" exclaimed the brickmaker; "and sent by him, I give it welcome."

When Blanche again awoke to consciousness, it was after a long period of utter insensibility from weakness; and even then, though restored to the possession of her intellectual faculties, such was her debility, that she had not strength even to uplift her arm, or to raise her voice so as to utter any articulate sound. She was stretched upon a couch: around her, on three sides, was perfect darkness; but the fourth showed her, through a door-like aperture, a dim, red, sullen glare, in the midst of which strange figures flitted to and fro. There broke upon her ear a low, monotonous chaunt, and at intervals the sounds of the scourge, accompanied by groans and stifled cries.

Some of the figures that hovered about in the

red light, were those of gaunt, emaciated men, stripped to the middle ; others seemed those of women, also naked to the waist—some having arms and busts in all the proportions of beauty, others in hideously distorted parody of the form of women, the pendent breasts being thrown back over the shoulders, but all alike supporting on the latter, heads black, shapeless, and demon-like in their aspect.

The terrific idea seized the imagination of Blanche that she was dead, and that these were the shades of the departed around her ; and then, the light becoming gradually extinct, and all these voices —after joining in a low and mournful chorus— subsiding into unbroken silence, the thought flashed across her brain that she was perhaps doomed to eternal darkness and immobility ; and under the influence of this awful imagination, it began to wander again. In vain she attempted to utter a prayer ; in vain to call upon the name of Mattheus; and thus she relapsed into unconsciousness. But for this, she might have seen, a few minutes afterwards, the red flame blaze up again more brightly, and shew by its increased light that these were all human beings assembled in a rude log cabin.

The men seemed, mostly by their long beards and the cut of their hair, to be peasants or traders, though one or two, by their shaven chins and such portions of their usual attire as they still wore, appeared to be of superior rank.

The women, who were barefooted, trod, like the men, over the sharp flints of the floor ; and their faces were masked with hoods of black cloth, like

those of some of the religious orders of the Romish church.

Nevertheless, it was easy to distinguish amongst them a similar difference of caste. The peasant women were mostly betrayed, either by the disgusting malformation so common among the Russian females of their class, or by the unconcern with which they trod over the shards and pebbles to which their horny feet were insensible; whilst the penitents of superior rank could only move in agony.

There was one in particular whose tender feet were cut and bleeding; she too, drew like the others, at a given signal, a garment woven of coarse, prickly horse-hair, over her back and shoulders, torn and scarred by the scourge, but which had been left carefully intact wherever they were exposed, when she wore a low-bodied dress; for this fair ascetic frequented the court assemblies, and routs, and balls, it being one of the rules of this strange society, that its members should continue to follow all the usual habits of their walk of life.

Among this assemblage, the brickmaker was evidently regarded as the spiritual chief, the minister or prophet: and it is time to inform the reader that Blanche had been carried for security into the midst of the conventicle of one of those secret sects which of late years have been springing up like mushrooms in the Russian empire, and are daily discovered and silently suppressed by the Imperial government. Although a very small portion of those in existenee are supposed to be found out—for naturally all the arts of the police

in gathering information must fail with men who compare with every threat the eternal terrors with which indiscretion threatens them, and weigh contemptuously every bribe with the immortal reward which they anticipate—still, even those discovered have of late years augmented to an extent which would immediately alarm the government if they had any correspondence or connexion with each other.

They appear, on the contrary, to be totally distinct, and to embrace not only in a few instances tenets of austere and gloomy piety, but in the majority of cases the most opposite and unheard-of extravagances of doctrine and of practice. All that the human mind can conceive of most outrageous and revoltingly horrible in the wildest aberrations of insanity, has been brought to light in some of these recently discovered sects in the Russian empire; and in fact, in any attempt to describe the most remarkable of these associations of fanatics, the pen of fiction would find itself stopped short on the blushing page at the very commencement of a narrative which should attempt to pourtray the whole truth, as well as to keep within its limits.

There are even well-informed Russians who look upon this recent and increasing tendency as threatening more proximate and great changes than any other existing influence, and who argue a more imminent, instead of a diminished danger from the disconnexion of these sects, alleging reasons epitomized in the metaphor, which compares them to the fungi, poisonous, and rank, and slimy, though of different aspects, properties, and tribes, which,

without identity of root or parent seed, all spring alike from the rottenness of the prostrate tree, from whose bark they take their parasitic growth. The profound demoralization of society, and the subservience of the national church, are supposed by some to give involuntary birth to these dicidences frequently so monstrous.

It may be said indeed, that of late years there has been no great, or at least no proportionate increase, in the universal corruption and venality; but then to this a lamentable truth is objected, that the improved organization and centralization of the present reign have enabled oppression to pervade the whole fabric of society, restricting even that faint liberty which the most ruthless tyranny, unless it possesses this knowledge, can never prevent betwixt the very intervals of upraising its remorseless hand to deal the blow.

In this respect Russia, not many years ago, more resembled Turkey, where the rapacity, the violence, and ferocity of rulers being untutored, did not allow them to do more than strike and desolate; and all over its provinces, rights, privileges, and liberties, only occasionally violated, have survived amidst its heterogeneous population. But of later years, extortion and oppression, without being greatly increased, have learned so much more minutely and intimately to penetrate into every social recess, that the yoke has become more benumbing and intolerable; and as men are wont, when their condition becomes hopelessly degraded, to seek their consolations at the foot of the altar, so has the Russian: but then, if he is at all of

inquiring mind, and rise above the gross superstitions—which the tenets of the Greek church cannot be said to authorize, but into which its practice in Russia has degenerated—he sees the religion presiding at that altar, at whose foot he has taken refuge—so far from being able to afford him hope or protection—hand-bound, and suffering itself, whilst a booted soldier bestrides its neck, and guides with iron grasp the hand professing to hold the keys of Heaven.

The sectarians over whom the brickmaker was presiding in the lonely and abandoned hut—isolated in the midst of wood and morass—where they were holding their weekly meeting, would, if discovered, have been classed between the *Bespopoftchina*, on account of their neglect of all the ceremonial of religion, and the *Doukobortsi*, on account of their strange practices; the mysterious tenets of the latter causing the vulgar to attribute to them forms and doctrines the most contradictory, so that they be only wild and extravagant.

And thus it happens that, with some of these known—though vaguely known, persuasions—are incessantly confounded all those original and independent sects which fill up innumerable shades of difference betwixt a faith dictated by austere and gloomy self-denial, and others which—degenerating into a horrible consecration of infamy—appear to have been conceived by some morbid inversion of the human brain during the ravings of insanity.

The assemblage to which the reader has been introduced consisted of the votaries of a belief into whose dreamy tenets we will not enter, but which

induced a form of worship and rites which were characterized by an almost Trappist severity.

After alternate intervals of silence and of prayer, a board was taken up in the centre of the apartment, and exhibited an oblong hole. The females of the congregation now came forward, two at a time, armed with spades, and dug away at it amidst the chanted prayers of the rest for several minutes, being then relieved by two more in succession till it was judged to be sufficiently deep.

Then the elder or prophet, or whatever they styled the old brickmaker, seated himself on the mound of earth thrown up, letting his feet fall into the grave—for it was a grave—and, thus seated, he gave way to the enthusiasm which his hearers accounted inspiration, and to the flow of which they listened with devout attention.

Here and there, from the wildest metaphysical conceits mixed up with quotations from Scripture and the early fathers—and all incoherently strung together, with a grotesque and yet startling eloquence—it might have been gathered that he regarded matter and spirit as in an incessant state of antagonism, and that it was only when the spirit should be entirely freed from the trammels of matter with its consequent individuality—that it should, at last, and perhaps after being linked to the flesh through many successive lives, succeed in disengaging itself for ever from material corruption, and soar upwards, like the air-bubbles disengaged from a fetid pool, to be absorbed into the one pure and finally indivisible element from which it had been violently separated. He looked on individuality as

the root of sin, and as distinctive of matter—the great arch-fiend with which he called on them incessantly to battle.

Some terrible mortification or penance his flock were called on daily to undergo, in order to regain, by this retaliation on the body and the feelings, the victory from matter triumphing through sin.

One by one, the penitents came up, and kneeling, with their hands between his knees, confessed aloud their faults, and glorying in their self-inflicted mortifications.

It was strange to hear a slave's wife ransack her past life, to bring to light its coarsest features, and then to hear the court lady detailing to the rude brickmaker her catalogue of dazzling, hideous sins.

"Here," said the enthusiast, pointing to the grave, "here, to-morrow at midnight, we will meet over the body of our departed sister—this night our brethren are snatching it from the cemetery of the children of the benighted!—Her's was a happy fate—but as she died from the fever, they have buried her remains in lime—this must not be—too long, too long she suffered from the clay that clogged her spirit—the worm and slow corruption must avenge upon that body her so long imprisoned spirit—and we, my fellow-sufferers, must enjoy the spectacle of this our victory over the flesh."

"Lives yet the woman from whom she caught the malady?"

"She lives," said one of the sisters, approaching Blanche and putting her hand upon her heart.

"Whose turn is it now to nurse her?" said the Prophet.

"Mine," answered one of the hooded females.

"Fearest thou still the pestilence?" said the Prophet.

"No longer," replied the sister. "If the fever comes, I will open my arms to receive it as doth the bridegroom to the bride."

"Thou shalt not watch her. Fearest thou?" said he, turning to another.

And this—the fair and high-born lady, with the small bleeding feet, replied, "Not for myself, if I may remain and watch her 'till she dies. But oh! I tremble at the idea of going back, and carrying the disease with me to those I love."

"Then thou shalt nurse her, and go back unto those thou lovest."

"Oh! that is beyond my strength!" exclaimed the fair penitent in an agony.

"What!" replied the Prophet, "the greater and more intimate the terrors and mortification, the greater the victory! The imprisoned spirit becomes like the external body, callous and numb, till there is no point on which you can inflict pain; and then, as it were, a nerve is suddenly laid bare all sensitive and full of feeling, and you neglect this opportunity of trampling on the flesh! Kneel down and recite again aloud the sin for which thou hast fought so valiantly to be absolved, and think on that ethereal particle whose redemption thou wishest so to achieve."

The sister knelt at her confession, and then, an hour afterwards, when all the congregation had departed, she was sitting by the side of Blanche, with her wan hand in her's and tending her, not

only to brave a danger in compensation of an equal amount of guilt in the stern spirit of her sect, but with all the pity and affection of a sister.

When Blanche again recovered her senses, nothing tended more to soothe and prevent them from wandering again than the soft face bending over her, and the gentle voice addressing her in a language she could understand. By degrees the whole of the scene, which had shaken her so terribly, recurred to her recollection, and she came again to understand how cruelly all her hopes had been wrecked in her husband,—the craven, and the slave, whom her own imagination had travestied into the hero,—and who, working upon her inexperience and devotion, had selfishly dragged her, Blanche Mortimer, the last noble scion of a house of ancestral glories—innocent and unsuspecting, and spotless in her purity, down into the most ignominious depths of degradation; and then, even her indignation gave way to involuntary anxiety, and her contempt was softening into pity, when on the bench beside her she recognized the handwriting of a note pinned to an old shabby cloak; for in the course of her removal from one place to another, her soft and costly shawls of Cashmere had been stolen, but the spoiler who was no other than Vasili,—with the superstitious respect of the lower order of Russians for all letters—had attached it to the garments he had substituted for her own.

Blanche asked, with all the energy which her feeble voice allowed, for the letter, which she could not reach, and which, when handed to her, she perused with eager excitement. It was as follows:

THE LETTER OF MATTHEUS.

"If any conceivable degree of temptation could prove a palliation—if any conceivable magnitude of suffering could offer an atonement for a crime like mine towards you, then I might plead such a temptation, such a punishment; and I appeal to both in the solemn voice of one who will never see you more on this side of the grave. I invoke the distracting love which tempted me, and the maddening doom which parts me from you in extenuation of my guilt.

"The sons of light, when they took to their bosoms the daughters of men, were never tempted as I was tempted, and Cain, when he wandered forth alone with his remorse, had not in his heart the desolation gnawing mine! for Cain had not been driven out of such a paradise as I have been.

"But now that I go, in mercy hear me plead in the melancholy hope of pity and forgiveness, a hope which now will be my only solace. That I, slave as I was, should have loved you, was only what would happen again if the past were present. It was no more my fault when you were so loveable, than it is our's that the sun shines when it dazzles our eyes with its light and radiance; but where I was in fault was, in daring to link your fate to mine, in daring to deceive you—it is true that with the inspiring thought that you would share it—I had never doubted of carving out a name that even you need not have blushed to own. I should have done so first and have wooed you afterwards: but alas! my sanguine hopes too fatally persuaded—

you smiled—and I was lost—I committed the crime of securing you before my fortunes.

"But time presses. Let me at least live on in the knowledge that you are not ignorant of the expiation.

"Blanche! dear Blanche! whose name, mixed with excruciating memories, my lips will hourly pronounce till death, but which from me will never meet your eye or ear again. Dear Blanche! I have found strength to live a life more painful than a thousand deaths—a life of unimaginable humiliations, to free you from the degradation to which *I* must bow.

"When you recover, as something whispers me you will, all is prepared for your escape.

"Vasili Petrovitch holds in sacred trust the whole of your fortune—as for the ignominious ties which still attach you to the slave, these Blanche, dear Blanche, will be soon dissevered.

"And then, when that last wrong has ceased with my life, when you have heard all that I endured whilst enduring for your safety—when you have heard all that I dared, to avert your contempt—then Blanche—for the last time, *dear Blanche*, perhaps your gentle heart, forgetful of all these injuries, may deign one tender recollection to the memory of

"MATTHEUS."

When Blanche had read the letter through, the fevered brightness of her eyes was dimmed by tears; and just then she experienced, as she moved, an indescribable sensation, which caused the blood to

throb tumultuously towards her temples from her heart, as all the violence of her returning love therein expanding, seemed to chase it towards the brow—Blanche had just felt that

> ....She held within
> A second principle of life,

which, if she should die now

> Would close its little being without light,
> And go down to the grave unborn, wherein
> Blossom and bough lie withered in one blight.

Death struggled with life for many hours, and meanwhile the pale sister watched and prayed.

CHAPTER III.

"If my memory serves me rightly," said the Prince, "you are the man who formerly so much took my father's fancy with your inventions for converting silver roubles into old lumbering iron."

"They were intended, high-born Sir," replied the steward, "to convert old iron into silver roubles."

"Intended perhaps," replied the Prince; "but I am afraid that the intent and the effect of most of the projects which my father patronised, and which you presided over, were often at variance. I have vague memories of machines constructed to raise water, which only raised the wind, and that at the expense of my worthy progenitor, of all sorts of wheels and engines intended to draw the gold out of those unlucky mines, and which only ended in drawing it out of his pocket to sink it in them. Yes, I am afraid that what all that sort of thing is intended for is often at variance with what it accomplishes."

"You are right, my honoured Lord," said Johann; "philosophy teaches us the uncertainty of all things; and you speak with such critical

knowledge of the subject, that I think you must have made mechanics your favourite study."

"You flatter," replied the Prince.

"Not I," continued the steward; "philosophy rejects all recourse to arts so futile; but allow me to observe, that if you should judge fit to continue the erection of the steam-mills which my late lamented lord commenced—"

"If I do," replied the Prince, "I promise you I will remember you."

"You make me proud and happy."

"I will remember, considering all your successes, most carefully to avoid your assistance."

Johann smiled faintly.

"But though I have not made either mechanism or philosophy my peculiar study, there is another branch of knowledge to which, besides great natural aptitude, I have devoted unremitting attention, I mean the science of arithmetic, of figures and accounts."

At this, the faint smile changed to a visible elongation of countenance.

"Your deeply lamented father," commenced the steward—

"Deeply lamented, I dare say," continued Ivan; "for I suppose you do deeply lament him."

Johann nodded assent, and then replied:

"Philosophy, my honoured Lord, has, however, partly consoled me for his loss; and the happiness of seeing such a successor has done the rest. Your deeply lamented father—then as I was saying, whose soul overflowed with kindness and philanthropy—your deeply lamented father, my high

well-born Lord, sought only to have his estates benevolently administered."

"And so he chose you," said the Prince, "to whose natural disposition his own ideas were so congenial."

"I humbly hope so," replied Johann.

"But now look you," said Isaakoff, "every man to his taste; he was master then, and I am now. I am more of a satanic than of an angelic temper. I am a stern misanthropist, who want to have my peasants governed harshly, malevolently, diabolically. I want a steward who will squeeze them as dry as a grape-husk, and that I fear will not suit you."

"My Lord," said Johann, looking very hard in the Prince's impenetrable face, "my Lord, if such were the orders I received from an honoured master, I—I could look very sharp after them too."

Here Horace suddenly walked out into the verandah to conceal a burst of laughter.

"A useful man of all work," observed Isaakoff. "I have one word more to say, and then you may go for the present."

"I listen, my Lord."

"You will manage, if you please, that Nadeshta may live in the house for the present on the same terms as in my father's time. You will send to Moscow or take her thither, and see that she is supplied, regardless of cost, with all that is required for the toilet. I wish her to keep us company, and I do not wish her temper to be ruffled; for, if I judge aright, she has a will of her own."

"Indeed she has, my Lord; and what woman has not? But I need not tell you, who know as well as I do, that, though by dint of starvation, and the lash, and labour, we can keep our male slaves in tolerable order—the women sometimes incorrigibly resist all our efforts, setting punishment utterly at defiance."

"I am fully sensible of it; but you will also be pleased to let her understand that her brother's treatment will depend upon her own amiability; for the present, I have dismissed him from personal attendance on myself. When you go to Moscow to-morrow, you will repair to Madame A's, the milliner, where you are to pay the bills of that cursed Italian singer."

"Nadeshta is certainly very beautiful, if I dared observe thus much," said the steward, who thought cunningly to sound whether she were likely to rise in the Lord's favour; "and, though she be wilful, her accomplishments, her education, and her manners, as I have heard say, are quite those of a great lady."

"And now I remember," continued the Prince, indirectly answering the remark made by Johann, "when you see Madame A—, you will inquire whether she still pays as liberally as of old for pretty apprentices, either for sale or hire; and you ask what she will give for Nadeshta three months hence, with her beauty, manner, and accomplishments; and remind the good lady that my former dealings with her will enable me to judge pretty accurately what advantage she will derive from such a purchase."

"I understand you, my Lord," said Johann, with a sort of twinkle of the eye, which almost amounted to a wink.

"Is your right eye convulsively affected?" inquired the Prince.

"Oh dear me, no," said the steward, again looking gravely respectful.

"I have another observation to make. Pray let the female part of the service of the house be done by cleanly and good-looking wenches, if you can find any in my villages. I do not like to be meeting at every step with all imaginable varieties of female ugliness and distortion. You will send away from under this roof all that I have yet met beneath it. There is, for instance, that little fat woman, with a face like the back of a measly pig, and a sour expression animating it, like the sauces of your German kitchen—all lard and vinegar. Who is she?"

"That, my Lord," said Johann, "is my wife."

Isaakoff knew it.

"I pity you," said he.

Johann sighed.

"And then," continued the Prince, "there is a female, dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, —exceedingly like her—who behaves atrociously to me."

"To you, my Lord?"

"She squints at me hideously."

"Oh! that is my daughter," said Johann, naïvely.

"Your daughter, is it?—then as she is so nearly related to a person I esteem so profoundly,

she must also remain. Perhaps you will, however, contrive that she shall either keep out of my way, unless she will wear a black patch over one eye; for it makes me nervous to see her open a cross-fire with them."

"If she has the misfortune to displease my honoured master—"

"That will do; now go, Johann."

In dispensing with the services of Mattheus, his master, too acute an observer not to see exactly where he wounded, had done so, because he felt that continuing his slave in the menial service to which he had degraded him, would be but a slight addition to an infliction to which, amidst so many other causes of uneasiness, he must be now becoming callous.

The Prince, who had always been addicted to high play, had, by an extraordinary run of ill-luck, lost so largely to his present guest, that Horace had considered that he could not discontinue playing as long as he was so considerably the winner. Night after night, they had therefore continued, Horace's luck only occasionally ebbing to return in a stronger and more determined tide.

At length, the extent of his winnings was so enormous, as to cause him uneasiness and restraint, which tended to make him feel that it was neither agreeable to remain, nor delicate for him to leave, though Isaakoff interpreted his embarrassment into a wish to that effect.

Aware both of the impression which Nadeshta had produced upon his guest, and of the mutual affection of the brother and sister, the slave-master

looked upon her as a means of retaining Horace till his luck should take a turn; for his losses, seriously affecting his fortune, had added the excitement of deep interest in the struggle to that which the gratification of his revenge still afforded him; and, besides, he saw in her a precious instrument for subsequently torturing his victim.

CHAPTER IV.

THE shades of evening are darkening. Nadeshta is again beside the grave of her mother, sitting on another humble mound.

Next to her is her brother, this time her real brother: with one hand he covers his face, whilst the other is pressed betwixt the hands of Nadeshta.

Opposite to them stands the old Starost, stroking down his beard thoughtfully, and watching them with a sympathy resembling the instinctive sagacity with which a dog regards the affliction of his human master.

"Alas!" said Nadeshta bitterly, "how little did I dream, my poor Mattheus, that when I looked forward, day after day, and year after year, to your arrival, how little did I dream that we should meet as we are meeting here without a hope!"

"Without a hope!" exclaimed Mattheus, "I have a misgiving that even she will not be saved."

"Speak not to me of her," said Nadeshta bitterly, "when all the illusions of my youth are for ever withered, when my poor brother is restored to my arms, his mind, his courage quelled, his

spirit broken amidst the despair which, on every side surrounds us, when there is no refuge for us but beneath the sod on which we are now sitting."

"And not even there a refuge for me," replied Mattheus, "I should not even dare to die in the fear of leaving her exposed to the fate—"

"To the fate of your sister," interrupted Nadeshta.

"Oh!" said Mattheus, with a look of bewilderment, and pressing his palm against his forehead, "that is true; but then—"

"But then, you would say, she was not born like your slave sister to suffer. What, my poor Mattheus! influenced at last, even in those thoughts of whose freedom you were once so proud of boasting; born forsooth to servitude or liberty! if there were anything in the condition of the parent that should affect the destiny of the child, then in compensation, the children of the free and wealthy ought rather to be impoverished and enslaved, the offspring of the bondsman and the pauper, rich and independent."

"Oh, not that, Nadeshta; but there weighs on me the remorse of having dragged *her* down. Now you and I are in the position in which God caused us to be born."

"Accuse not God of the crimes of men; for our position is man's crime, no work of God's."

"Oh Nadeshta! that thought was once my own, but time and study and the fruit of sorrow's fatal tree have made me feel that on our race there rests a malediction more ancient and more bitter than the curse which stamps the Hebrew! Whose impious

hand shall dare rebuild the fallen temple? What Sclavonian shall venture to rise from the prostration, in which the line of *Sur*, of which he is the unhappy scion, has been for tens of centuries trampled? Oh I have striven to banish the desolating thought—the terrible conviction—but when I contemplate our hopeless woe and their prosperity who make us suffer, then its reality returns, and then I learn to know that just as man is subject to disease and misery for sins committed when the world was young, so he is doomed to bend beneath a master."

"On earth man has no legitimate master," said Nadeshta—"even in those that govern him—for, if honest, they are his servitors, if unjust, his tyrants."

"Oh, my sister, your spirit is yet unbroken by grief. Good God! to think that they will break it—"

"Never!" said Nadeshta, "my heart, perhaps, but not my spirit."

"Alas! what know we of ourselves?"

"Oh that I could only instil my own into your bosom, my poor brother!"

"Nadeshta! sorrow has taught me to believe that, as there is a remedy for every disease, an antidote for every poison, so perhaps there is a virtue characteristic of every station,—placed in antagonism to every suffering,—which for the bondsman is resignation."

"Resignation!" said Nadeshta impatiently.

"Resignation," repeated her brother, "has not my own fate taught it me. What is there for

me but to turn towards the example of the cross, with its nails, and crown of thorns? What but to emulate its gentle patience? Tell me, Nadeshta, when one reflects on my position what other virtue fits it? The eloquent and burning thoughts, the iron stoicism, the high resolves, on which I have dwelt so often, are all impossible for me; they would be guilt not virtue; they would heap fresh wrath upon the head already stricken through my fault, and therefore I submit to everything, my sister, since aught but absolute submissiveness would be to abandon her to the misery into which her love for me has led her."

"Love!" replied Nadeshta bitterly, "love, do you call it love? The love of the civilized, of the high-born and the gentle: the love which promises to endure, through danger, crime, and misery, and turns, at the first misfortune, towards the object of its fickle passion with scorn upon the lip! The love of these western dames is truly like the chivalrous gallantry of their men. Oh, no! give me rather the affection of our coarse village slaves, rude as themselves, but true and unpretending. No, no, my poor Mattvei, forget that heartless wife of thine, there is no one loves thee like thy poor Nadeshta."

"Oh! consider Nadeshta, how I have left her, helpless and degraded, and alone and sick."

"And thou, my brother?"

"Children," said the old Starost, who had been long looking wistfully at them, "children, though you speak in the language of the blagorodie (nobility)—in the tongue of the Niemetz—I can trace

as much sorrow in your tone as if you spoke it out in good, plain, honest, Christian, Russ:—"

"Father," said Nadeshta, "though thy head is the clearest and boldest in all the villages of the estate, and though thou hast done more to shield our people than any in them, it is new to see thee pity any affliction."

"Pity," replied the rustic misanthropist, "no, why pity such things as men?" and here his eye seemed to wander involuntarily towards Mattheus, and he continued, "or women either, excepting one who stands before me,—the woman of the bold heart and of the iron will,—and with her it is not pity for the tears she sheds so rarely, it is *hate* of those who cause them to flow."

"Well," replied Nadeshta, "I seek no sympathy in grief, for that is selfishly to spread one's pain. I scorn all pity; but still, whatever moves thee, our fellow slaves trust only thee with all thy bitter words and cruel speeches."

"Daughter, the fools have learned to love my rude contempt, because contrasting it with my foresight for them and the Niemetz steward's honeyed language and his hungry soul."

"Why dost thou seek us now then, father?"

"For them, as I have sought thee out so oft before, I need not ask; I see already that our hopes, or their hopes, I would say, are blighted in the ear, like the fields of corn before a famine harvest. When thou hadst favour, thou wilt recollect how they remembered it; and I remembered it, and besought thy intercession in so many matters."

"Yes," said Nadeshta, "they remembered it when I had it."

"Only then, it is true," said the Starost, "I always told thee so—what then? They are slaves with us; they are our own people, against our baron and the foreigner. Well they have long been brooding in discontent and longing for a change, they have got it, like an oupravitel (steward), whom I once knew, who broke the slave's backs by making them carry clay and bricks. They rose and threw him into his own kiln: that would not satisfy him, and so the flames carried away his soul to the devil's furnace, where he is burning to this hour; and wishing for the kiln perhaps, ha! ha! Well, in their fresh trouble, then, daughter, they have watched narrowly the Lord's behaviour towards thee, they think thou art again rising, they pray thee to watch over them. I see the prayer is idle; thou canst do nothing, I rejoice in it.

"I rejoice in it," continued the Starost, as Nadeshta shook her head silently and mournfully, "I rejoice in it, because I, who have seen much,—who have learned to know that the rain is coming when I see the cloud, the frost when the east wind howls in autumn—I see the misery that is coming on them. The Lord's gold flows away night after night like the waters of the rivulet, the corn, the hay —the stock is selling. This day I have received orders to note down all the families exceeding a given number, and to pick out two hundred individuals, the weakest, the sickliest, the most useless—these the Lord is going to let to a Moscow manufacturer."

"Oh God!" said Nadeshta, "things are getting

worse indeed; all this would have made the old Lord's hair stand on end."

"We class them into sorts," continued the Starost, "like hemp, tallow, and bristles; I am to note the barren women, and the youths and the girls who are weak-chested. The steward delights in this unchristian regularity, all these are to go.

"The Lord, who is long-headed says, 'that it is more profitable to breed slaves than pigs; that his steward cannot cheat him in human souls as he can of produce.' In a word, this place is becoming worse than Siberia, and yet till hunger gripes these sheep by their very throats they will do nothing."

"What would you have them do?" said Nadeshta.

"What would I have them do? What sayest thou, Mattvei, man of the strong arm, who knowest the arts and hast the wisdom and the language of the foreigner—what?"

"Suffer in patience and embrace their cross."

"That is not my counsel: if there is no protection for the slave, if God be too high, the Emperor too far off, if God's servants strip him of his savings, and give him hand-bound to his Lord, if the Emperor's servants wring out what his Lord has overlooked, still the slave has his advantage—for the slave there is no punishment. Hark ye, both, all know that I was born in a distant government from which the slaves were starved out; but they do not know the vengeance that we took, they do not know what I tell you both, that, when we were

maddened, when we tore our oppressors limb from limb, what happened? We got bread, they knouted and sent forty of us to Siberia, I was one of them —my back is marked with the knout now—I have seen Siberia. Neither were punishment to what we suffered; the knout, according as the executioner lays it on, may be death or it may be the mere cut of a whip—what is that to a slave whose flesh has been raw for months? And then the knout has its predilections: it cuts into the vitals of rebellious Poles, and priests, and nobles; they die from it, not we—for who cares whether a slave should be vigorously punished! When he is placed on the sleigh before execution and covered with a mat, the crowd throw on it copper pieces in their pity, and, if bribed by this, the executioner handles tenderly his terrible instrument, if no one bids him strike.

"As for Siberia, what of that? When convicts reach Siberia they inquire not whether a man is an assassin, or a fraudulent bankrupt. So he knows a trade, and be a hale strong man, he never goes to perish in the mines, unless he be a *blagarodne* (nobleman). They know the value of a man too well, and look at his craft and muscle, not his crime.

"Yes, I can foretell the rain when I see the cloud coming: this will be worse than Siberia soon; once worse, the worse the better, so that you and I may die then, Mattvei."

"Peace, peace!" said Mattvei, "disturb me not, old man, with such wild words. Here let us pray to rest, and to rest soon in the quiet grave, on whose

turf we are now sitting. But I must go—where do we meet, Nadeshta?"

"Where, daughter?" said the Starost.

"You know my arbour by the river side, in the lone dry wood, amidst the grove of hazels beyond the marsh; do you remember it, brother, it was there we built our hut of moss, it was there we had our gardens. That recollection has endeared it to me ever since. I will go to-morrow and every day at noon."

"Before we part, daughter, let me deliver my message. You know the three and twenty chosen girls with whom the steward bade thee stand to scatter flowers? This morning, by the Prince's orders, five have been chosen for the service of the house, the rest are to be married next Monday."

"Well," said Nadeshta coldly, "several of them were betrothed, they waited his permission."

"They have got his order instead; but their betrothal serves them nothing; the steward has suggested, or the Lord imagined, some plan for marrying his young men to middle-aged women, his girls to grey-headed men to increase the population more rapidly; for, after all, as he observes, if he wants to sell or pawn his estate to the government, their value is estimated by the number of souls upon it, and a male child three days old reckons like a vigorous peasant.

"They are thus all to wed men between forty-eight and fifty-five; if I cannot find as many single in this village I am to go to the next.

"These women and their families and their

betrothed have implored me to see if thou couldst do anything; one and all pray thee to help them; if thou art powerless now, they—these girls, and their grey-beard fathers—all suggest that if thou wouldst only smile, if thou wouldst only use the arts of a woman, thou wouldst not long be powerless; but, daughter, the words are not mine."

"No, father!" said Nadeshta indignantly, "better thy axe, thy brick-kiln, better Siberia and the knout; and yet," she added turning to her brother, as a deep blush came over her countenance, "yet for the Lord and his guest, so fallen and so helpless are we, I daily deck myself in choice attire, I daily sing, I warble with a breaking heart notes full of joyful melody, I smile and I despise myself. But oh! there is only one in the world, my lost, my spirit-broken brother! for whom that smile and its deceit are not a crime—only a baseness."

CHAPTER V.

It is an autumn day in an almost autumnless clime. The nights are already frosty, though the sun shines so hot and brightly till it sinks to rest, and though the leaves of the oak and birch—bitten by the night cold through the stem and killed—hang yet unwithered on the parent trees.

Horace, with gun and dogs has gone, he says, to shoot the double-snipe, an autumnal bird of passage.

He is met, as he crosses the high road by his host, who walks along beside him, not much, it would appear, to the satisfaction of the sportsman.

They pursue their way along the dry path through a wood, and reach the river.

It is evident that all cordiality has ceased betwixt these men, so recently united in the bonds of that intimate companionship, so often termed friendship; and yet quite as obvious that both have some deep interest in concealing the mutual dislike which now inspires them.

"Here, then, I leave you," said the Prince, "if you persist in beating over this marsh. I am not equipped for bog-trotting; but though the

birds are in plenty here, you can never get at them."

"Half the pleasure of the sportsman's diversion is in following the direction his caprice points out," replied Horace. "Good bye!"

"Till dinner-time, then!" said Isaakoff. "But I am not so obtuse as you imagine. Though there may be double-snipes along the marsh, I am not ignorant that, if you cross it, you will come to certain thickets, where, in a solitary bower, a turtle-dove is wont to nestle. Never mind, I am not like the stingy owners of preserves in England, who give you leave to shoot and make a reservation of hen-pheasants and of hares. Good sport, my boy, till dinner-time!"

Along the right bank of the river there runs a belt of land, high and dry—covered with a short fine flowery grass and shrubs—which separates it from a wide grassy wood-girt plain, green and even as a savannah. But this is a treacherous moss, in the centre of which the crane, the wild swan, and the curlew may be often seen alighting, secure in its inaccessibility to human footsteps. Its very edges quake beneath the tread, and it is evident that only a superstratum of the tangled vegetation of the surface supports precariously any passing weight above the slough it covers.

From this prairie-looking expanse, the superabundant water—which the saturated moss cannot soak up—is discharged into the river through many little rivulets, which, at intervals of a few hundred paces, traverse the broad natural causeway that divides the marsh from the stream.

The trunk of a fallen tree, or a few pine-logs rudely thrown together, afforded passage over these interruptions to the path which Horace was pursuing. When, however, he had nearly reached the park-like terra-firma which stretched for miles along the river side, he found a pool before him, where the rotten wood of the rude bridge had given way. The water, clear—though darkly tinted by the mosses—and unfathomable to the eye, perhaps from its hue, or perhaps from the overspreading leaves of the lotus, had the startling aspect of all deep silent waters.

The rale, as it ran lightly over the broad leaves of the innumerable water-lilies, called up associations of solitude and of hidden vegetation, entangling—like the arms of a malevolent water-sprite—the limbs of the strong swimmer who trusted to its glassy surface, rendering it more formidable to face than the wild current of an angry stream.

Horace was hence induced to turn aside, and, a little higher up, he saw that the cut was so narrow—as it spread between banks of firm and solid-looking turf—that he was sure that he could leap across it.

But the green turf itself was treacherous; it quaked beneath his footsteps, and he sank through the surface. In vain he struggled, until, his knees being imbedded in the moss, he felt that every motion was plunging him deeper into it. He saved himself indeed from being immediately engulphed by holding his gun across, which for a time supported him. He turned his head in the hope that Ivan was still within sight, and, to his inconceivable delight, perceived him on the path-

way which skirted the other side of the marsh, though on the point of entering the wood. Horace hailed him in the stentorian tones of a man whose life depends upon his being heard.

The Prince did hear him, for he could just be distinguished pausing as he turned back to listen. His ear was quick; so was his apprehension; he guessed directly what had happened, and the thought flashed across his mind that the green bog would wipe out all the ruinous score against him which had been accumulating on the green baize—and then Horace saw him turn into the wood.

"He saw me!" gasped Horace; "and he leaves me to be smothered—the assassin!"

The gun laid across had in so far assisted the sinking man, that, though he was still settling deeper and deeper into the quagmire, it was now by degrees imperceptible, excepting when he made the slightest motion.

His dogs stood on the edge of the bog and howled; when he called to them they would not venture upon it. Terrified and exhausted, he paused and endeavoured to think on what was best to be done. There was plenty of time for reflection. But what did reflection shew him — that he was alone in a wild trackless solitude, where no human voice could hear his accents, though ever so loud, though ever so piteous; where even whilst he was reflecting, he was half an inch nearer his inevitable death; where life was measured by a few inches, like the wick of an almost exhausted taper diminishing to the eye. And then,—just as he had contemplated the utter inutility of so doing—in the

terror of his fearful situation, he called out again with all the strength which despair could give to his youthful lungs.

This time he startled the wild-fowl from the middle of the marsh; the stilted crane flapped heavily into the air, and the curlew flew piping over his head in numerous gyrations before it settled. Then the whole scene resumed its silence; and he knew that, in a brief space, the green treacherous moss would have closed over his head, leaving no trace of his death-struggle.

There is something in the indifference of Nature peculiarly full of awe to the mind of a strong and healthy man, in the prospect of thus slowly and inevitably dying, surrounded by a peaceful solitary scene.

To perish amidst the roar of tempests when the wild waves seem to clamour for life; to fall amid the thunder of battle, or to die amidst the admiration, pity, hate, or even execration of a living crowd —all these may be appalling—but what is it to the consciousness of expiring in a lonely waste, amidst unsympathising objects, animate and inanimate, all reckless of the momentous and dreaded passage from life to death as of the falling of a dew-drop from the bough on which it has been gathering, to be absorbed into the earth, or lost amid the waters —to know that the cloud which is sweeping past will sail on across the sky—that the shadows of the trees thrown over the green turf will still slowly lengthen—that the sun will shine on benignantly—all no more heeding these last convulsive moments and these agonies, than if there had only

sunk upon the marsh the fly born to live but till sunset—whose wings buzz in the ear of the death-devoted now as it flits past—and who will still hover over the spot with the same vibrating hum when the pitiless morass has engulphed the sufferer!

At length—just when all seemed most desperate —he heard a human voice behind him; he turned his head, and, to his inexpressible joy, there stood upon the bank a bearded moujik. No words can paint the delight which this apparition of the Starost—for it was he—imparted to the heart of Horace; for, in fact, that homely peasant was the harbinger of life in the midst of death—a death of which, he had been slowly tasting the full bitterness.

"Ah!" thought he, "friend! whoever you are, you come well for the punishment of your perfidious master and for your own reward. I will purchase your freedom and endow you with the richest farm on the domain, half the value of which, he has forfeited to me."

But as the peasant seemed hesitating on the brink, he mustered what Russ occurred to him, and called: "Brother! brother! speedily!"

"I hear and obey!" replied the Starost.

He took his axe from his girdle, and, detaching a pole and one of the beams from the broken bridge, he brought it to the edge of the moss. Here he first plunged the pole slowly into the bog, and seeing that it sunk down to its full length—more than a fathom—he looked around him at first, as if for help, and then having assured himself that there was no one within sight, he paused a

moment irresolutely, whilst a singular expression stole over his countenance.

"Quick, brother! quick!" shouted Horace.

"*Brother! brother!*" ironically repeated the moujik, whose eyes were kindling malignantly.

"Yes, we are brothers, dog of a Niemetz! (foreigner) dog of a noble! we are brothers now, when I can save thee. Verily save thee! for what? That thou art a friend of my Baron's? That thou shouldst teach him to wring more wealth from the blood, and sweat, and thews, and sinews of his peasantry. Call upon thy fellow countryman, the Niemetz steward—he is thy brother—not I—not I. Thou remindest me of the late Lord's spaniel: he snarled and bit our heels, and we dared not kick out his entrails; but when I saw him drowning in the fish-pond, and there was no one there to say I saw him drown, dost think I fished him out? Not I—not I."

Horace, who could not understand the words of the peasant, but who was strangely alarmed at the menace of his manner, again appealed imploringly: "Brother! brother!"

"Brother!" replied the peasant contemptuously, "you and the like of you are pretty brothers! My mother, when she fell ill was sold to a mill, where they bought worn-out slaves!"

"Make haste, brother!"

"Brother! My first child died for want of milk when we all wandered abroad from starvation!"

"Quick! quick!"

"Ay, quick! Call not on me—call on your God, if indeed you Germans have any God but

your bellies," said the peasant, who, nevertheless, inspired Horace with some hope; for he laid down the beam across the green surface, and walked out upon it.

The Starost looked around him. He took his axe from his girdle. Horace stretched forth his hand. He could just have reached it, when he saw it upraised to stun him with the blunt end.

"Thus," said the Starost ferociously: "thus I knocked the Lord's puppy on the head when he yelped on the water's edge."

Horace doubled his arm in an instinctive endeavour to protect his head, and the Starost leaned forward as far as he could keep his balance on the beam; but he could not reach his victim by a few inches. Nevertheless, owing to the involuntary movement which the Count had made, he had sunk still deeper, and was now up to his arm-pits.

"My curse light on you—fit slave of an infamous master!"

"Speak on in thy foreign tongue, I cannot reach thee; but what matters? In a few minutes more thou perishest. No man ever comes forth from the bosom of the moss, ha! ha! Yesterday thou wert drinking of the Lord's costly wine!—to-day of the cold peat water, and thou wilt have thy fill, ha! ha!"

The Starost stepped back to the dry land: he lifted up and cast down the beam.

"Brother!" shrieked Horace, despairingly.

"Brother!" repeated the peasant mockingly. "Ay, thou holdest out thy arms to me as thou heldest them out to the slave's sister, from whose

lips thy lascivious lips stole the kisses meant for a brother! Fold thy arms on the cold moss!—press thy mouth to it now; for the cold moss has folded thee in its arms.; it is rising fast to press thy hot lips; and that embrace will last till the day of judgment. Ha! ha! ha!"

The peasant was going. Horace watched his departing footsteps—he was left alone—alone with his despair. Why had he shunned the blow of the merciful axe? For he forgot that the Starost could not reach him.

One minute passed, and then another, and another, and another minute. Whether from the chill of the water, or from the horror of his situation, his teeth chattered, and he began to shiver as in a tertian ague; for, if he had never thought to tremble thus when face to face with the grim king of terrors, he had never dreamed of meeting him in a shape so appalling.

He closed his eyes—he attempted to pray—he could not recall his scattered thoughts. Strange sounds were in his ears; there danced before his sight a singular and incongruous mixture of scenes and personages from the life he was departing, all indistinct, and dim, and vaguely blending together in form and feature, like the figures of a dissolving view. Isaakoff, the buffoon, and Madame Obrasoff — the Starost and the Duchess—Anna and the Prince—all dreamily mingled. He heard the cheer of an English mob—the roar of a torrent in the haunts of the chamois—and lastly he was in the boudoir of Peterhoff, before the portrait of Nadeshta; and then the portrait swelled like a reflection of the magic lan-

tern to the size of life. It detached itself from the disc of light; it started into sudden animation; it breathed, it moved, it spoke, it called out to him! He opened his eyes, and Nadeshta stood upon the brink of the moss.

She was very pale with emotion. She had been calling out to Horace—now Horace answered her: "Save me!—save me!"

"Stretch out your arms to the utmost," said the slave girl, throwing out to him with presence of mind and dexterity the pole with which the Starost had fathomed the bog. "Try and get this under them!"

He succeeded in doing so.

"Now," said Nadeshta, "what shall I do? If I leave him to call for assistance, he will have sunk before any help can come. I have not strength to throw this beam so that he can reach it. I cannot with my unarmed hands detach more timber from the bridge!"

At length, she pushed the beam over the surface of the moss, farther than the peasant had pushed it, and stepping upon it, walked intrepidly out to the extremity. She there held out her hand to Horace, but could not quite reach him; and as she endeavoured to do so, almost lost her balance.

"Enough!" said Horace, "enough, noble girl! leave me; for you would only perish with me."

"That," said Nadeshta contemptuously, "I might do if I were a man, or at least a foreign wife—a noble lady—with old blood in my veins—love and romance upon my lips."

"Leave me!" said Horace, "leave me!" and

as he spoke, her hand grasped his; but to reach it, she had stretched out so far, that, losing her equilibrium, she fell, and cleaving the surface of the bog by the force of her fall, sank at once nearly up to the middle.

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Horace, as he made a desperate and mighty effort, which only imbedded him deeper in the fatal slough, for his acute sense of personal danger was now absorbed by his sympathy with hers.

"Rash! generous, unfortunate!—I cannot help you—cling to the beam—get back!"

"Get back!" echoed Nadeshta, calmly, though breathless with the sudden fall and the chillness of the water, "Can *you* get back?"

"Lay hold of the beam, I tell you!—struggle at once, and lustily, or you will sink as I have sunk—one energetic effort!"

"Which would plunge me deeper in."

"Good God!" exclaimed Horace, shocked at her making no attempt to move — "do you know what will happen to me where I am?—Do you know what will become of *you* if you cannot extricate yourself?"

"We shall perish!" answered Nadeshta, with a startling composure, derived from the very excitement of her nerves—"the moss will smother us."

"Oh!" said Horace, "this is too, too horrible! but hear me, noble and devoted woman! it is impossible that you can thus be left to die—I am hoarse with awakening this cursed solitude; but I will find a voice for you."

Horace gave a loud prolonged resounding shout,

which rang through the distant forest for many seconds afterwards.

There followed an interval of silence—nothing was heard but the bubbling of the water of the bog as Nadeshta sank a little deeper.

Once more Horace called out, but this time his sonorous outcry terminated in a wild shrill piercing cadence. Again all was silence—then it was responded to by the hoarse croak of the raven.

"Hark!" said Nadeshta, "how the very raven mocks us: we might cry out here from the growing to the waning moon, and no living soul within hearing.

"Oh; you are mistaken," said Horace eagerly, "you are the third within this half hour, that is to say inclusive of the Prince, with whom I came—eternal maledictions on him!—he saw me fall in here, and turned away, and left me."

"What I, the third? Oh! the second then must have been the Starost. Alas! there is no chance: —the Prince came with you, the Starost had just quitted me—there may now pass no human creature here for days."

"How horrible," said Horace, "what a hideous fate, to think that you too must perish with me."

"To think," replied Nadeshta "that the Count de Montressan should lie by the side of the slave-girl! to think that his noble clay should decompose in a common grave with her's! the man of great name and of heraldic glories, side by side—in the undistinguishing moss—with the base peasant: a slave, whose pride, whose feelings, whose existence—whilst both living—could

not have weighed with one so gentle, against the caprice, the sport, the amusement of an hour.—Yes! the morass is a great leveller! the churchard rears its marble vanities to lie in the face of its dumb truthful master—death; but not the morass—the honest morass. I may speak out now, without fear or hindrance, for we are both dying—inevitably dying."

"Dying," repeated Horace, mechanically, "dying! Oh! but can we not at least save *you*?"

"I have lived too long a life of illusion to indulge it now. It is impossible—you must face the stern reality, illustrious Count!"

"Oh! if I could but save you; so young, so beautiful, and to die thus!" said Horace.

"So high! so proud! so wealthy! and to die thus!" said Nadeshta.

"Why did you hazard yourself?"

"To be unlike the haughty, and the great; to be unlike the free and happy, whose chivalry, whose devotion, whose noble sentiments are falsehood all, though I believed them once—to profit by the privilege of the wretched—to shew the generosity which misery teaches, and which, with such as you, lives only on the lips. I do not fear to die."

"Nor I," replied Horace, "if you were only safe upon the bank. How could I die more pleasantly than gazing on a face so beautiful! so that it looked not into mine so angrily and so disdainfully! Give me your other hand, and hear me—I shall sink first—I *will* sink first, and then support yourself upon my head and shoulders—that will sustain you longer, and Heaven will send you succour."

"Not on earth," said Nadeshta; "whether or not it be to turn the slave's thoughts toward itself, I know not, but the enslaved are heaven-abandoned, here." And then she asked abruptly, "and you, what led you hither?—You came to seek me out."

Horace signed affirmatively.

"It is well. Reflect now, Lord of an illustrious lineage, of an ancient line! How came we both to be where we are now? You seeking an interview to insult the slave—the slave to save her insulting enemy—and thus we perish face to face; you ignominiously, and I . . . . though it is a chilling thought to smother on the cold waste . . and I," continued Nadeshta, with exultation, after an involuntary shudder, "to triumph as I die."

"You wrong me, noble girl! you wrong me, by all that is sacred! If I intended to seek you out this day, 'it was to bring you hope and consolation."

"Hark," said Nadeshta, "you shall hear what hope and consolation you could have brought me. Why should I not after all speak out? I shall soon be silent enough, and long enough silent.—Why should I not pour out all that has filled my soul so long, into the last human ear that can listen—that *must* listen to me? Why not before I die? What if it be from the slave to the lord, from the insulted maid into the ear of the libertine! Death levels all distinctions; rank and sex, and maidenly modesty, and pride are all confounded now—so hear me.

"One like yourself, Count Horace—a lord of the creation—one kneaded as he thought from the porcelain clay of earth—one lying now as cold as

you will be before evening—one for whom I have almost now the weakness to weep, took me—as he took my brother—from the penury and ignorance in which our fellows vegetate: he made us acquainted with the luxuries of wealth, of knowledge, and of intellect, and then he died, and left us in our degradation!

"I blush to remember him with affection, for he had indeed the affection of a father for me, because he could not lavish it upon his infamous son—your prince—my lord, from whose bondage I am fast escaping—but the greater his affection, the more his shame, the more his selfishness—when he clung to the unhallowed possession of his human property, till death overtook him in his maudlin false humanity and kindness. It is ever the same . . . ."

"Hear me," said Horace.

"Hear *me*," replied Nadeshta imperiously. "It is ever the same. I was to have been the toy of the young man's passion—of yours—ceded by the politeness of the host—devoted to a life of shame, a death of misery, to divert the ennui of his noble guest. The old man had no companion to amuse, no dupe to conciliate. In his passionless breast there was only the longing to pour out a vague affection upon some recipient object: so I was chosen as the toy on which his age could lavish it, unrepulsed by the chilling contempt, the unsympathising nature, of Ivan."

"Hark!" said Horace, "there is help at hand. What sound is that?"

"Croak! croak! croak! croak! cra, cra-a!"

replied the raven which had before answered the cry of Horace, as, drawn by its carnivorous instinct, it wheeled slowly round, flapping its dark wings as if anxious to alight.

"Help!" said Nadeshta. "There is no help for us but in death! Hear you not? It is the raven would dispute our bodies with the hungry moss. It waves its sable plumes, most noble Count, and none besides will nod over so illustrious a funeral! But why should the black raven interrupt me? Why? I was telling you how one of your cruel fellow lords, retaining me in thrall, set free my thoughts by showing me a world beyond my bondage—how he developed in the light of knowledge the feelings and the instincts whose productive germ might have lain dormant in mine ignorance, like seeds deep sunken in the bog—in which you and I are sinking. And then—that very light was the treacherous sunlight, which at morn and even deceives, which gilds and lends its halo to a barren scene, making its distant desolation beautiful. The world, which was before my eyes, I saw and I despised. I loathed our Russian great. I knew the cankered heart beating corrupt and faint beneath the orders and the stars which brand its base submissiveness! I saw insolence without pride first trample, and then lick the foot that trampled it in turn! I saw the sordid meanness of their rank profusion! But, oh! that world beyond! I imagined it just as books had painted it. I saw it pictured with deceitful words. I gazed upon its expanse, lighted up by poetry, and eloquence, and art!—and for that world I panted.

My dreams were of its gentle women and its generous and devoted men—those men whose feeling the chaste and classic virtues of republican antiquity had inspired, or who had drawn it from the glorious spirit of a softly daring chivalry—lavish of sighs for every tender thought, of blood and sympathising tears for every infortune!

"Such did I deem the inhabitants of those happy lands to be, as in the meditations of my childhood I have peopled the twinkling stars with beings bright and fabulous—and in this dream I was living still when first I met one of those chivalrous children of that envied West, whose voices rail against oppression, whose words are full of pity and protection towards the suffering and oppressed. And where and how met we? Say, Count! He having donned a menial habit, and snatching from an orphan sister's lips the kisses destined for a brother—defiling with impure deceit a mother's grave!—he coming with insult to the lowly—where, before my illusion was destroyed, before the spell was broken I could have worshipped, and have fluttered like an eager bird to meet the fascination of the snake. Oh, when I thought he was a brother, with what pride I looked upon his form, his beauty, and his noble mien! Never, no never, had my girlish dreams conjured up aught more winning than he seemed! It is you I mean, Count Horace! a maiden tells you so unblushingly, now that death has set his seal upon her forehead—that contempt has filled her heart with scorn!"

"Hear me, Nadeshta!" said Horace.

"And then," hastily continued Nadeshta, "your western women! your dames of noble lineage! My poor brother, whose soul and courage have been withered in that deceitful West—he married a woman—only think, a loving woman—proud of her birth and boastful of her passion! And what did she when misfortune lowered around her bosom's lord? She left him in his misery—as we are on this dreary waste—abandoned and alone."

"Hear me!" repeated Horace. "Since we must die, be it not, Nadeshta, with scorn in those eyes. God knows I am not faultless; and our meeting was a thoughtless cruelty. But I was not, as you deem me, quite ungenerous. I felt the pain I had given; I have striven to repair the injury I had done."

"I know what you would say. You found that I was not a mere illiterate peasant; and, when your friend—my master—acting on my brother's terror for his foreign and false-hearted wife, and on mine for him—when he made me earn each diminution of that unhappy brother's suffering by a smile—then you would say that, as you saw its mockery, you induced him not to constrain me to his odious presence—you were respectful and might have been rude. Along the very borders of this marsh, Count, I have chased in my girlhood many a butterfly; and oh! how softly and how gently—not to scare its timidity when it settled on a flower,—did I approach it with the very hand that swept the brightness from its ruined wings the moment it was closed upon my prize!"

"You wrong me, Nadeshta! you wrong me cruelly! Think you that, plunging thus into

eternity, I would speak false? If I am where I am, I die because I was seeking you out. I sought you out to bring you hope and consolation. Two hours ago, I parted from your brother; he sent me in his place to meet you, because his tyrant would not let him come."

"My brother sent you?"

"Oh, Nadeshta! when you hear all it will be more terrible for you to die; although for me it will be very sweet to see less angry glances from those eyes, which trouble and disturb my soul—as, so help me Heaven! they do, Nadeshta. Already I had determined on freeing you and him, when, to-day I first heard the details of his story. Only conceive, your brother was once an envied rival of my own—for I once loved Blanche Mortimer. And when I offered him just now my hand in token that my interest, my wealth, my life, if need were, should be lavished to see him righted, I thought myself the most generous of rivals; but now I feel that it was because your image had superseded hers who once caused that rivalry, and because he was your brother."

"Or, perhaps," said Nadeshta, still with bitterness, "perhaps rather our misfortune was too ignoble in your eyes till hallowed by participation with my brother's haughty wife."

"No," said Horace; "now that the vanities of station and of fortune are nothing in the face of death—now that its near approach like fire, has purged away the dross of empty conventionalities, I will tell you, in the solemn truth of a man's dying words, what urged me—for, blinded partially before, I see it now—it was my love for you!"

"For me?" said Nadeshta.

"For you! How mad I must have been to weigh my rank or fortune when I thought of *you*, now that I would die a clown and beggar to feast my eyes by gazing on you for five minutes more—on you whose image Heaven has interwoven so strangely with my destiny; for some mysterious chance, before we ever met, had impressed my memory with the features of a portrait incredibly resembling yours. Oh! it must have been one of those incomprehensible presentiments; for when you called me from the bank, I opened my closed eyes, to look on the reality of a vision floating then before them."

"If you," said Nadeshta, "only realized in every thing the picture of my young imagination's love, as in what I see and know of you, oh! I could have loved *you!*"

"When you look thus upon me," said Horace, "thus, I feel it almost sweet to die. Or are you not perhaps—if I were superstitious, I might think so—are you—for all this is like a dream so very strange—are you perhaps a guardian spirit, winning me back before my final hour from all life's gaudy vanities to love and peace? If so, I am won and fascinated, and my soul will take a flight too happy in such company. Or am I really here, imbedded in a fatal moss, and are you the Nadeshta of my living, waking life?"

"I am she," said Nadeshta, "whom at the Cross's foot you undeceived."

"To whom I vowed a brother's love: but whom I love as never brother loved!"

"Then tell me," said Nadeshta, in whose eyes

there gleamed a wild and feverish excitement, "if we were there, together, upon the bank a few yards off and saved, how would Count Horace act?"

"I would kneel at your feet," replied Horace, in a tone of similar exaltation. "I would say, Nadeshta! dear Nadeshta! your smile is Heaven to me!"

"Count Horace at the slave-girl's feet?"

"Oh Nadeshta! I would say, Fortune has bestowed on me rank and wealth; will you give them value in my eyes? I have an ancestral name respected long, and now indifferent to me. Love! will you teach me to regard it with affectionate pride by sharing in its honours?"

"So help you Heaven?"

"So help me Heaven!"

"Oh! how happily I could thus have lived!—Still I die happier than I had hoped to live."

"And, Nadeshta, what would you answer?"

"Horace!—dear Horace!"

"My love!"

"Oh, Horace! we are dying!—If it be sin, forgive me, Heaven! I only think of you."

"If I could only press you to my bosom—not as I once did in that unhallowed hour—but as my own, with God to witness my truth! If it were not that the motion might sink us, I would draw you towards me."

"Oh!" said Nadeshta, "we must die at last, and why not so?"

"Why not?—Come hide your blushes on my bosom—come, my Nadeshta!"

"So that I only reach you, love!—One prayer, my Horace, and I come."

For some time past, the slave-girl and the Count had joined their outstretched hands; and now he drew her towards him with all his might. As he had dreaded, they sank so rapidly that the wet moss rose to Nadeshta's chin. Horace made one desperate effort to reach her; and again the hovering raven was heard—croak! croak! croak! croak! and then the raven's mate took up the sinister note, her black wing almost sweeping the surface of the bog, as she answered—croak! croak! croak!

The raven is a bold bird: when an elk or a head of cattle sinks hopelessly in the marsh, it is said that, taught by its experience how speedily anything is sucked under the surface, as soon as it sees a living creature imbedded beyond all power of defence, it will pluck out the eyes as they roll in their last agony.

Horace and Nadeshta are in each other's arms; the astringent and deep amber-coloured water bubbles up from the moss, as from a well-soaked sponge; and in another moment it will reach their lips.

"Oh, Horace!—Horace!—Horace!" shrieked Nadeshta, as with the strong instinct of life she convulsively expelled the first bitter mouthful of the gurgling liquid; and then, raising herself a full inch, she exclaimed: "Oh, God!—Horace!—Horace! push forward your foot, I tread on something hard, and we may live!"

"Great God!" said Horace, "if you were only saved!"

"What!—I alone?—Oh, no!—I feel it!—I feel it!—but not the ground:—a tree—a tree,

deep buried in the bog! If it lies towards the bank we are saved, Horace!"

It may be necessary to explain, for the benefit of those who have never enjoyed the intense gratification of sinking through the moss of a wet moor, and then suddenly alighting on a hard, gravelly bottom, or any other solid substance imbedded in it, that in this case the danger becomes a mere affair of labour; for, the footing once secured, the body may gradually be edged forward, by working to and fro—just as a man does when buried to his neck in a snow-drift—till the solid bank is reached.

And, having pointed out this means of safety, it would be of course superfluous to say that Nadeshta and Horace made their way at last to terra-firma; for the reader has doubtless never entertained any serious fears for their safety, persuaded that—whatever the license assumed by modern authors—it would have been too ridiculously inadmissible to have allowed a hero and heroine of the tale, at the very commencement of the third volume, to perish in a bog, like flies agglutinated in a pot of treacle.

There may be also some, who will hypercritically inquire why such a scene, containing the inevitable elements of the ludicrous, should ever have been presented by the author?—But hereunto, with all due deference, he makes reply, that the reader is apt to be oblivious how, in common with the public—of which he is a component and respected atom—he *will* have love-scenes in a novel, whilst at the same time the majority of that very public is accustomed to watch the behaviour of the heroes

and heroines of an author—when it deigns to read him—with a solicitude as lynx-eyed to detect every departure from the rules of starched propriety, as ever maiden-aunt displays when chaperoning pretty nieces.

Now, if the reader can point out a situation, in which it was humanly possible to place a pair of lovers, better calculated to divest a *tête-à-tête* and declaration, of danger and of indecorum than a hopeless immersion to the neck in a cold moss, the author pledges himself to adopt the suggestion, should he ever reach a second edition.

CHAPTER VI.

Blanche is very pale, and very weak. Of her former beauty only those traces now remain which none of the ravages of sickness can obliterate, no convulsion of the human frame efface. Her smile is still sweetly mournful, and her sunken eye still beams softly bright; but, above all, an ardent hope, which no despondency can subdue, and a restless energy which her weakness cannot quell, blend with the profound anxiety which both express.

Blanche is a mother now.

And now, like the young tree—with leaves of everlasting green—upon whose boughs the fruit expands for the first time into rich maturity, succeeding the beauty and the fragrance of its withered blossoms, and yet, whereon these very blossoms bud and bloom again, beside these very golden proofs of its fecundity—so new feelings, impulses, and fears, have been generated in the young mother's bosom; and with their birth have been awakened the love and tenderness which filled it up before. The pride of station; the rooted prejudices of her childhood, the angry recollection of the injury inflicted on her have vanished:—she has no thought

now, but of her child, and of the father of her child.

What a bright thing is love—maternal love! and how, like knowledge, it betrays its immortal essence, undiminishing at the fount by its expansion, and by that which it imparts—both comparable, if one durst compare the nobler with the ignobler object, to what the sun appears, when ever giving forth its light and warmth without sensible diminution of its radiance. Thus is the mother's heart, when filled to overflowing with one passionate affection, and which yet finds room for another without detriment to the first.

Blanche leans on the arm of the old sectarian, whose grim features relent into an involuntary complacence and pity against which he struggles.

They stand at the door of the house of his brother in the suburb. Vasili Petrovitch is outside, superintending the erection of a wooden paling which is intended to shut out all view from the windows, at which his wife, Katinka, is too fond of looking out on to the lane, which has suspiciously become the resort of grey cloaks and plumed hats. He receives them with some embarrassment—ushers them in, and begs them to be seated.

Blanche seats herself, and replies to his welcome;—for she has learned to speak a little Russ, and to understand more: her austere companion stands in silence, fixing his eyes irreverently and gloomily upon the image of St. Sergius, his brother's household god.

"I have come, Vasili," said Ivan, at length,

"with this daughter of sorrow, to ask worldly counsel of thee, a worldly-minded man. Know then that this woman—whom Mattvei, the son of the good and just Mattvei Mattveitch, one of the Lord's departed saints, hath taken to his bosom—this woman who, Niemetz as she is, might, if brought up in the knowledge of the light, have been worthy to eat of the bread of eternal life, which thou hast not been chosen to partake of—this woman, I tell thee, Vasili, wishes to devote her foreign wealth to purchase the liberation of her husband from him who calls himself his Lord, to whom I myself have been given in bondage since my birth for the expiation of my sins, as thou wert until lately."

"I listen, brother," replied Vasili.

"As thou, Vasili, hast the art and knowledge of these worldly things, seek thou to effect this matter?"

"Brother," said Vasili, "the Prince Ivan Ivanovitch will be very difficult to deal with. He nourishes a deadly hate against our brother Mattvei."

"I know he does; but this much I know too, that, in the minds of the weak and wicked, the love of gold triumphs over hatred. Thou, at least, knowest how to deal with him."

"But," replied Vasili, "if for thy sake, Ivan, and for Mattvei's, I should attempt it, it will be no low figure that will induce your common Lord to yield him up his freedom."

"His wife weighs not his freedom against her gold. His freedom first she seeks at any price;

nevertheless, be thou wary and sparing in thy offers, remembering always that it is the portion of the orphan." Here Ivan looked hard at his brother, because his knowledge of his character led him to suspect that in such a transaction his inveterate habits of dishonest thrift might urge him to pilfer, though he was utterly astounded when Vasili replied:

"First, I must know what the fortune of this dove of our brother Mattvei's amounts to."

"Know. Who should know better than thou who holdest it?"

"I?" said Vasili, innocently.

"Thou. Did not Mattvei into thy hands confide her fortune?"

"Into my hands her fortune!" said Vasili with well feigned surprise, and crossing himself: "you dream, brother."

"What, wretch?" said Ivan, "dost thou deny the sacred deposit?"

"The only deposit Mattvei left with me," replied Vasili, with sullen effrontery, "was his Niemetz wife, and her I have transferred to thy care, as was agreed."

"Here," said Blanche, producing the letter of Mattheus. "He has written it to me here."

It may appear strange that Vasili Petrovitch, instead of withholding, should have taken so much pains to preserve and place under Blanche's eye a document which he might almost have been sure would contain some mention of the sum entrusted to him. It must, therefore, be observed that, independently of the superstitious respect of the

lower orders of Russians for all letters, Vasili's dishonesty had not been premeditated.

Judging him by other individuals of his class, whatever their usual dishonesty, there would have been no very gross imprudence in the confidence reposed in him by Mattheus under such circumstances, even if a choice of acting otherwise had been left him.

He had no intention of breaking through his trust at the time that he accepted it. It was only by degrees, as the amount of the property and the legal impunity with which he might appropriate it suggested itself to his mind, in a form irritatingly tempting to his cupidity, that he called to his aid that Byzantine casuistry, which the Muscovites seem to have inherited, with their alphabet and their architecture, from the Greeks of the Lower Empire.

"Mattvei has placed this sum in my hands," reasoned the covetous trader; "and, when he asks me for it, into his hands I will give it. What more am I bound to do? If he has told me to give it up to a strange woman, am I to do the foolish thing, to my brother's detriment? If my brother Mattvei had said to me 'take thou this knife and stab me,' was I to choose rather to slay my brother than to disobey him? Is it not written that 'the mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit; he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein;' and then, having satisfied his conscience that he was justified in refusing to deliver up Blanche's fortune to any one but Mattheus when he should come to claim it," he slyly addressed an invocation to his

patron, St. Sergius, praying that through his blessed intercession he would keep his brother Mattvei from ever returning personally to claim it.

To secure the intercession of the Saint, Vasili had first promised to set his image in a sheet of solid gold, weighing twelve zlotniks, and then, mingling a singular cunning with his superstition, he bethought him that, as he was only agreeing to reward his celestial protector, as soon as the service of warding off a threatened disagreeable should have been duly performed; it was obvious that he could never be called upon, at least, not till his own death or that of Mattheus, to fulfil his part of the bargain; and therefore, trusting to the remote necessity for payment, he liberally increased his bribe from twelve zlotniks to fifty.

Thus, in his self-estimation, Vasili Petrovitch had satisfied at once his sense of duty towards his neighbour, towards Heaven, and towards himself. He knew that the Pope, for a jolly glass and a pink note, would bear him out in his views; and he was congratulating himself on having turned to a creed so comfortably administered from the "stern, uncompromising, unreasonable, austerity of the Old Faith," when Ivan thundered in his ear:

"Brother! brother! beware! Mattvei, with his own lips, told me that he had confided that woman's portion to thee!"

"If I were to write upon a paper, I have entrusted wealth to Ivan Petrovitch—if I were to turn to the Niemetza, and say: 'Sister, I have entrusted wealth to Ivan Petrovitch,' would that make it true, and couldst thou, Ivan, help it?"

"Oh God!" said Blanche, "does he deny it?"

"Dost thou utterly deny the deposit?" said Ivan.

"I utterly deny all charge of any moneys; and I take to witness...." Here Vasili, crossing himself and mentally promising a candle to Saint Sergius turned towards his image.

"Swear not," said the sectarian with stern disgust. "Besides, is it not written: 'What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein to make dumb idols?'"

And then turning to Blanche—who, forgetting in her agitation the scanty Russ she had mastered, had seized Vasili's arm, and was appealing to him by the mute supplication of look and action—said:

"Come, my daughter, let us go. The treacherous dealer hath dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealer hath dealt very treacherously! Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh the flesh his arm! As for thee, Vasili Petrovitch—though one womb bare us—although we have grown two fruits on the same tree, whereof when the harvest came I have foreseen the rotten one would be cast aside—yet even here below, I now abjure thee. Thou shalt be to me henceforth as the gentile and the stranger, for thou hast made thy heart as an adamant stone lest thou shouldst hear the law. With lies thou hast made sad the heart of the righteous. I curse thee, son of my mother, son of my father."

"Oh Ivan, curse me not!" said the superstitious Vasili, turning very pale, and seizing the hem of the ironmonger's caftan to retain him; "what have I done?"

"The sin of Judah," replied the sectarian, "is written with a pen of iron. Thou hast 'oppressed the fatherless and the stranger.' Fear and the pit and the snare are upon thee, oh inhabitant of the earth! Thou shalt be numbered with those of whom the Lord saith, 'When they fast I will not hear their cry; when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them. Thou shalt die a grievous death; thou shalt not be lamented, neither shalt thou be buried; but thou shalt be as dung upon the face of the earth!'"

"Brother," said Vasili, who, having been brought up in the same faith was fluent in the Scriptures, "is it not written, that 'whoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of a judgment?'"

"But it is also written," said Ivan, stretching out his hand and hurrying Blanche away, 'it is also written if thy right hand offend thee cut it off and cast it from thee, if thy right eye offend thee pluck it out and cast it from thee,' and thus I cast thee from me,—thou art an abomination in the sight of the Lord,—and thus I say to thee, Raca!"

And the old man, fevered with the enthusiasm of his denunciation, and the young mother leaning on his arm, and stunned by this new misfortune, stood once more in the open street.

Katinka, who was growing very weary of the jealous seclusion in which she was kept, was taking

her last look from the window, and Vasili Petrovitch, though feeling a little uncomfortable at the malediction of his brother, consoled himself at the thought that the worst scene was over, and that he retained possession of the roubles.

"For, after all, what sort of a saint would be my patron, St. Sergius, if he could not protect me against such an unreasonable curse?" ejaculated the trader, with a shrewd notion of interesting the pride of that holy personage by the query.

Ivan, walking with hasty step, led Blanche along in silence so rapidly that, almost fainting with exhaustion, she implored him to stop.

They had paused opposite the Church of Kazan. A busy crowd was thronging the semi-circular area in front of it, and the deep solemn chant of the choir celebrating mass within was distinctly audible from where they stood.

The sectarian, as he walked along, after having thus renounced his brother, had been brooding over the change of faith to which he attributed his crying dishonesty—his thoughts had wandered back to the days of his early youth, when Vasili as well as himself kneeled with his father in the same austere worship—a worship from which Mammon, and the world, and the lies of the false prophets of the dominant church, had seduced him, and at this moment the sounds of its pomp burst insultingly upon his ear. His eye wandered with irritation over the heterodox architecture of the cathedral, with its semi-circular colonnade: it had been his intention to hurry past it, as past a pest-house, when Blanche, overcome with fatigue, suddenly

stopped upon his arm, and at this moment one passer by observed to another, "It is the high mass of the Metropolitan."

Ivan Petrovitch knitted his brows: he beckoned to the driver of a vehicle plying for hire, seated Blanche in it, and told the Isvostchik whither he was to drive.

"But you will come with me?" said Blanche, "I must—I must consult with you."

"Go, daughter, go in peace," replied the fanatic, "I must do the Lord's bidding and not thine, I must testify against the Antichrist."

"But, good Ivan," exclaimed Blanche, "when shall I see you?"

"When the last trumpet sounds to rouse the quick and the dead," said Ivan, and, signing with his hand, the driver urged on his horses.

"Now, oh Lord!" exclaimed the old man, "I hear thy voice and I obey it, saying as of old, 'son of man, set thy face against Zidon and prophesy against it.'"

The Metropolitan of Novogorod and St. Petersburg, the most reverend, or (as he subscribes himself) the humble seraphin was celebrating Mass in the Church of our Lady of Kazan. The Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, as the primate of the national church of Russia, is still looked up to with great veneration by some fifty millions of its votaries, although the Imperial power has long since juggled every semblance not only of authority but of independence out of his hands.

He has become, in fact, only the first bishop, and, like all other bishops in Russia, he is classed

according to military rank, and really owes his unrestricted nomination to the crown. A Russian bishop is not necessarily attached to any diocese, called eparchy in the Greek Church, but may hold the title as a sort of brevet. The whole church is governed by a holy synod of which the Emperor appoints the members. He is represented in it by the ober-procurator, lately an aide-de-camp of his own, with whom every proposition must originate, and practically, besides appointing the synod, the Emperor can at any moment dismiss any member belonging to it. Nevertheless, to throw dust in the eyes of the vulgar faithful, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg is designated as the president of a council, which is entirely at the beck of the Emperor's delegate. And then the attendant wealth and pomp have been made commensurate with the ostensible importance of his station, and are displayed in gaudy magnificence, congenial to the oriental taste of an Eastern Church.

The humble Father Seraphin belongs—as all bishops must—to the black or monastic clergy, a body widely differing in learning and in practice from its corrupt, debauched, and ignorant brethren, the white or secular priesthood.

He is a mild and venerable prelate, pious it is said and erudite, and bearing in his demeanour the conscious impress of the hopeless insignificance of his high-sounding title; for, in truth, he appears before his flock like the famished actor of a country town, who plays the millionnaire upon the boards. The congregation of the Kazan Church bow nevertheless as low as if he were the Roman pontiff,

and cross themselves with assiduity, and beat their breasts with fervour, as they admire the splendour of his array and the pomp of his attendance.

The Greek priests, the finest-looking men in the empire, allow their beards to grow unshaven, and their hair unshorn from their youth. The mass resembles that of the Roman Catholics, excepting that instrumental music is not tolerated, but then the magnificent bass voices of the choir are allowed in their deep imposing harmony to exceed even the sacred melody of Rome.

The church, like all other Russian churches, has all the richness and glitter of Flanders and of Italy, though unredeemed by a vestige of taste, because the fine arts have been judged, in the barbarian bigotry of the Muscovite hand-maidens to oprofane to be allowed the decoration of a Christian Church. And then there is this main distinction, that a vast screen, representing the veil of the temple, and called the *Iconostas*, or place of Images, shuts out from the nave of the church, in which the congregation kneel, the sanctuary in which mass is said; and the three gates which open from it, consisting of a groundwork of gilt arabesques, are not only kept closed, but a purple curtain is drawn to within, during the greater part of the service, to conceal what passes from the gaze of the people. This screen is covered, like a picture gallery, with the figures of saints and holy personages, painted in a style of conventional hideousness, and placed in frames, which are glaring sheets of gold and silver, set with jewels and illumined by rich lamps.

On the ambon, a sort of raised step, stands the deacon, and in a sonorous voice repeats the Ektenii, the Russian litanies, which are now half filled with the names of the members of the imperial families, and of all the departments of the government—whilst, at the termination of every verse, the choir, who represent the faithful flock, respond in chorus with the "Gospodee pomiloui nas!—Oh! Lord have mercy upon us."

The altar within the sanctuary is cubical instead of oblong as in the Romish churches, and, in the ceremony of the mass, the leavened instead of the unleavened bread is used—slight difference apparently—though the latter led the Byzantine Greeks rather to welcome the rule of Islamism than seek succour from the Latins.

The Metropolitan, surrounded by his priests and deacons, is dressed in the richly embroidered dalmatic of the Greek Emperors transferred to their patriarchs, and the gorgeous and pontifical omophora or sacred scarf, with its deep fringe, is round his neck—he has quitted the sanctuary—he mounts upon the elevation, called the ambon, to give his benediction to the people.

At this moment Ivan Petrovitch steps forward. His grey hair streams back—his wild eye dilates—he shakes his hand almost in the bishop's face, and thunders out in a stentorian voice as he points to his garments:

"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls."

Right and left, hands were laid on the intruder

by the bystanders, but, thrusting those who held him rudely aside, he mounted the ambon.

"There is a conspiracy in the midst thereof—like a roaring lion ravening the prey, they have devoured souls. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things.

"False prophet!—false shepherd! whither leadest thou astray the sheep of Israel? Verily I will testify against thee!"

Here Ivan was again seized by several of the attendants, whom he had for a moment shaken off.

"Yea, verily I will testify against thee—thou art an abomination in the sight of the Lord—wolf in sheep's clothing, Antichrist! thus I spit upon thee"

And, as Ivan spoke—pushing his body forward, in advance of his pinioned arms—he spat full in the face of the Primate of the Russian Church.

A murmur of indignation arose among the crowd at this sacrilegious outrage on the high priest in his very temple.

The most reverend seraphin received the indignity with apostolic humility of manner—he forbade them to injure him, and wiped the spittle calmly from his right eye. He made a sign to remove the fanatic, and continued his benediction.

"Woe to the idle shepherd, that leaveth the flock—the sword shall be upon his arm, and in his right eye—his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye darkened!" said Ivan, exulting in the grotesque aptitude of his citation, and struggling with his captors as they bore him off. "Woe! woe! woe! to the Antichrist— Woe! woe! to you, lost sheep of Israel."

CHAPTER VII.

Vasili Petrovitch is sitting at his tea. It is handed to him by the fair Katinka, who looks pouting and sullen, but her husband, as he complacently surveys her, only observes that she is getting fat. As for himself, he has all the satisfied air of a man well to do in the world. It is true that his brother, the sectarian, has rendered himself amenable to a terrible and irremissible punishment, but he has learned philosophically to regard this, as if death from illness or insanity had overtaken his relative.

Vasili's affairs are prospering—all that he touches seems to turn to gold; besides which, we have seen how apt is the gold which his fingers touch to stick to them. On the other hand, Vasili laughs in his beard when he thinks how he has baffled all the admirers of his gay young wife, and how completely he has isolated her from all possibility of temptation; for not only is the wooden paling finished which shuts out all external view, but whenever removed from his own eye, she is left under the active and incessant surveillance of a personage who acts as cook and dueña in his household, and who is not to be bribed or tampered with, either by the besiegers without, or the disaffected garrison within, because, in the first place, the beldame is Vasili's aunt, and, in the next, she hates his young wife

much more than she loves anything that could be offered to gain her over. In addition to these causes of satisfaction, Vasili stands well with the Police Major of his district, and is on excellent terms with his patron Saint Sergius.

The wary trader had attained the summit of his ambition, that is to say, if there be any summit to ambition, which is more than doubtful, but at least he had reached the extreme point to which he had ever aspired before, though not exactly the degree of wealth to which he now looked forward. After all, there is not perhaps in St. Petersburg a man easier in his mind or conscience, or more self-satisfied; when lo! some altercation is heard without, and the old aunt bursts in, breathless, if not speechless with terror, ejaculating "Oh Lord! Oh Lord! O Lord! the Police."

The old trader winced a little, because such a visitation under any circumstances occasions some expense; but he reassured himself by the thought which he at once expressed, "that he stood well with the police."

"Oh worse, worse, worse, than all the civic police of the quarter—two of Count Benkendorf's chancery. Oh, woe is me! woe is me!"

At this intelligence Vasili looked very blank—he was accustomed to the civic police and its frequent extortions, and he knew how to deal with it—but the secret and inquisitorial police of the empire, which seldom interferes with men of his degree, inspired him with a mysterious awe. The unlimited power, the terrible reputation, of this institution, and his knowledge that its familiars, where once they intrude, do not loose their hold for any inconsiderable bribe—all tended to alarm him. What was to be done? He could think

of nothing but crossing himself, and, whilst he was crossing himself, in stalked an officer of gendarmerie in his pale blue uniform, with silver lace and his cocked hat upon his head, and accompanied by another official.

The gendarmerie is the executive force, at the sole disposal of the Grand Master, and therefore the well known and widely dreaded garb of this one individual shewed at once the character of his companion, although he was wrapped in the grey cloak, with the imperial buttons, worn in every department of the military and civil service.

"Which?" asked the gendarme officer imperiously, as he smoothed down his moustachio, "which is Vasili Petrovitch, merchant of the first guild, and a recently made freeman?"

"May it please your nobility," replied Vasili, with some trepidation, "I am he."

"*You* are Vasili Petrovitch!" said the officer, directing towards him a severe and scrutinising look, as if there had existed strong temptation for any one to personate the merchant under such circumstances.

"I am your humble slave, Vasili Petrovitch; though I know not—"

"Silence," said the officer: and then, turning to the other, he said with immense deference and some emphasis, "this is Vasili Petrovitch."

"Oh! this is he. Take thy hat, Vasili Petrovitch, and prepare to follow us. It is ordered so."

"Shall we seal up his papers" said the gendarme.

"Oh Lord! Lord! Oh holy Saint Sergius! ejaculated Vasili. "Oh your excellencies, I swear to you by the Holy Trinity—"

"Hush!" said the cloaked official haughtily to the trader; and then he answered snappishly and abruptly to the suggestion of the officer of gendarmerie. "It is not ordered. Vasili Petrovitch, thou hast no children," he continued, referring to a note-book.

"None, none," repeated Vasili. "I am a weak, poor, miserable, lone, old man."

"But thou hast a wife; go fetch her."

"I obey, my Lord, my very merciful Lord," said Vasili Petrovitch, who hastened into the room where his wife, and the aunt, and their only servitor were cowering in a corner, like poultry frightened by a kite.

"Hark ye," said Vasili, "truly my heart has been in my mouth, and I knew not what I was doing; but things may yet be mended;" and, with a deep sigh, he drew from the profound depths of an inner pocket two bank notes.

"Oh my fanatical brother! my fanatical brother! this all comes of thee, because thou wilt not give to Cæsar what is Cæsar's. I must give to Cæsar what is Vasili Petrovitch's! and yet with Benkendorf's people, no trifling—big bits for great fishes," (here Vasili sighed again) "where they come it is like the spiggot in the barrel—you are lucky if you can plug it with a lump of gold."

"Oh, Vasili Petrovitch!" said the aunt, "welcome be the first expense if it be the last."

"Oh yes," said Vasili, who had recovered his confidence, and who was drawing the bank note between his thumb and finger, as if loth to part with it, though aware of the expediency of so doing. "Oh yes, with this;—and then they ask to see my wife—they are young men both. What if they take her

off?" This idea seemed at once to determine the astute old man, so, taking by the hand his beldame aunt, he said to her: "Hear me, thou must personate my wife."

"What?" said Katinka, to whom the idea was not so formidable. "What? trifle with the high police. What? play with Benkendorf's people?"

"It is no play," replied Vasili; "but very sad and serious earnest. You, child, stir not from hence!" and, locking the door, he insured obedience, whilst he led his old aunt upon his arm.

"One word aside with you, my very merciful Lord," said he to the man in the cloak, "I guess wherefore you have been sent to me. I know I have a foolish brother; but it is well known that we had nothing in common; and I have, in fact, the assurance from one of the civil police-masters that I shall not be confounded in this matter concerning it, or molested. You will, therefore, readily see that there must be some mistake, as you will find, if you will look to this memorandum, which I pray you keep."

Then Vasili turned to the gendarme.

"His Excellency agrees," he whispered, "that it must be a misapprehension. Let me pray you be seated." Here Vasili took the hand of the gendarme, and pressed into it a hundred rouble note—to the official in the cloak he had given a thousand.

"What is this?" said the gendarme, "money! do you think to bribe me?" But here the man in the cloak, whom he treated with great deference, turned round and gave him a significant look, which silenced him. The gendarme pocketed it, as well as his superior.

"Vasili Petrovitch, this is a worse business than you think for."

"Through your kindness, however," replied Vasili, "all may go well, I feel; but what can I offer to my noble guests? What will you take, gentlemen—champagne?"

"Where is your wife?" said the man in the cloak more sternly than before.

"My wife, merciful Lord—my wife—this is my poor old wife," replied Vasili, pointing to the old crone.

"That! your wife!" exclaimed the gendarme; but his companion authoritatively interrupted him, and said with a malicious smile:

"Nay, Vasili Petrovitch, thou hast inspired an interest in me as far as my orders will allow. Come thyself—we want thee; and as for thy wife, she shall remain. We will take the rest of thy household instead of her."

"Oh! I am undone! I am ruined!" said Vasili, who, besides finding the affair wear an aspect so serious, was caught in his own trap.

"But you had really, really better leave my household, and take my wife whom you here behold!"

"Oh! holy Trinity!" said the old woman in a paroxysm of terror, "he is deceiving your merciful nobility. I am not his wife. Only look at me—I knew him before he was born. I have danced him on my knee."

"What! are you his grandmother then?" said the gendarme laughing; and again the cloaked official interrupted his misplaced levity by wrathfully exclaiming: "What! I have defiled his mother! the hound has been playing me false then?"

"Viniebat! Viniebat! I confess—I confess my fault!" said Vasili, falling prostrate.

"Go bring his wife and all his people before me;" and the officer of gendarmerie walked out, led by the old aunt.

"Rise!" said the other, as soon as he was gone. "Rise and harken to me. Though thou hast deceived me, I wish thee well. It may be too that thou art guiltless."

"By the Lord, as I am an humble, honest trader, I am innocent of aught against the Emperor, or his servants, or their laws!"

"Very like, very like, that does not mend the matter; for, when the truth is sifted from you, if you prove guiltless, why then our office is a sorry customer for an humble, honest, trader to deal with; for, even if at length found innocent, it is apt to be judged more politic to keep so obscure an individual safe, than to turn him loose, where secrecy is for the good of the Imperial service."

"Oh, holy Saint Sergius!"

"Thou hast, however, strongly interested my sympathies by that little memorandum—that style of setting forth one's innocence is convincing; if I should contrive to bring you safe back from your trial, perhaps you will let me see the conclusion of it."

"I am poor," said Vasili Petrovitch; "but oh! I am grateful."

"I will take it out in champagne or millinery," whispered the familiar with a wink; "but now listen, our only chance is in keeping your affair very quiet. When you have been duly interrogated and confronted, I must contrive to keep the business as much as possible from the notice of our chiefs, and to let you slip away unperceived."

"Oh! the Lord grant it!" said Vasili.

"As you value your safety, let no rash application be made. You need not even let the police of your quarter know of our visit. I can almost take on me to leave some of your people, who need only say that you are for a few days absent; but if I do, will you forget the champagne?"

"May St. Sergius forget me at my last hour if I do!"

"Two cases remember; and, honest Vasili Petrovitch, it is understood of the right mark."

"It is understood, my Lord;" but, even at such a moment, Vasili reckoned that the precise mark was not stipulated. He could save sixpence a bottle by delivering the lower priced. Just as he was endeavouring to change the subject, lest Cliquot should be specified, a scuffle was heard in the passage; and, as the door flew open, the officer of gendarmerie was seen with his arm around Katinka's waist.

"Oh!" said Vasili Petrovitch, opening wide his mouth like a roaring lion, to emit a terrible exclamation, which as his fear quelled his jealousy, subsided into a slight ejaculation.

"What! how now?—what are you doing there?" said the familiar sternly.

"I was only feeling for treasonable papers concealed about her person."

"That is no duty of yours, Sir. Re-assure yourself, Madam. When you are searched, it shall be in private."

"Oh! oh! oh!" groaned Vasili.

"Is this the whole of your establishment?" continued the official, pointing to the old aunt and a clownish boy.

"All that live under my roof."

"I will not disturb them. Hark you, my friends,

if any one inquires for Vasili Petrovitch, he is absent for a few days. Now, Vasili Petrovitch, follow me."

Vasili enjoined to his wife, his aunt, and the serving lad, the most religious silence concerning what had happened.

"To your wife we will recommend silence at the office, for she is going with us."

Vasili groaned, and, turning to his wife, said, "Katinka!"

"Don't talk to me!" sobbed Katinka, "to think that I should have married an old wretch who has got into trouble with Count Benkendorf's office!"

"As for you two, you are warned," resumed the official, and then, turning to the gendarme, "You, sir, take this man in your custody, you know whither. You, madame, follow me."

"Did you say I was to take charge of the lady?"

"No, Sir, I said of this man; though first, before we leave her, you might search the person of his aunt: don't be alarmed, good woman."

"I am not, your nobility."

"Oh, no; she has been searched already," said the gendarme, who, giving Vasili Petrovitch a spiteful squeeze of the arm, hurried him forward.

"For the present you must be hand-bound and blindfolded."

"Oh, in the name of the holy Saint Sergius, where am I going then?"

"To the dungeons of the fortress. Speak not a word; but follow me."

In utter darkness, and in perfect silence, Vasili Petrovitch felt himself hurried along; and, in the same unbroken silence and unrelieved darkness, he was led down steps, and left alone in a chill subterranean

abode. Here he spent four weary hours; and then finding the confinement of his bonds intolerable, he lay down, having worked himself into a paroxysm of fear.

Let us shift the scene.

Lochadoff and Durakoff, and two or three more of their merry companions are sitting round the table, considerably excited by the wine, which goes sparkling round.

Jakof is introduced.

"A lock of his hair!—a lock of his hair!—a lock of his hair!" shout all the party in chorus.

"Well, gentlemen," said Jakof, "merit, like water, will always find its level at last. The sentiment was feminine, the idea was novel and pretty—to obtain surreptitiously a lock of my hair."

"Don't boast of your conquests," said Lochadoff, laughing.

"Why not, of what is? You, gentlemen, who affect to be severe and witty, are apt to boast of what is not. I remember a certain bet with Durakoff last Monday, that he was to bring the Katinka to sup with us."

"Oh! the bet was not clearly made," said Lochadoff.

"Very clearly made. Now I suppose he won't pay! Why does that Durakoff bet, when he has not a kopek with which to bless himself?—But I hold you responsible for it, Lochadoff."

"If you will not let him off."

"Let him off!—not I. Why does he lay such foolish wagers? I knew the thing was morally impossible:—I tried it myself, and if any body could have got her away, it would have been I."

"You know her then!—now what do you think of her?"

"A large foot, a nose too Roxalana—too fair—too fat—too Russian."

"He has been ill-treated by the Katinka!"

"Not I," replied Jakof, "only surfeited. You may laugh, gentlemen; but she persecuted me:—it was a sort of Obrasoff affair."

Here followed a roar of laughter.

"I have Katinka painted somewhere by Lesseps: and, by the by, do you know what has happened to him?"

"To Lesseps?"

"He called on me this afternoon, he has fallen into profound disgrace. He has affronted the Emperor, and received orders to quit the empire in four-and-twenty hours."

"What, Lesseps!"

"Poor devil! he has played with the lion, till the lion turned angry," continued Jakof; "he came to ask me for what I owed him. Confound it! thought I, I will have a slave sent to Rome, and made a great artist of:—it would be cheaper, though, after all; as you may imagine, under such circumstances, I paid him generously."

"You, generously!—A medal shall record it!"

"Or it shall be graven on the Alexander column; but sit down," said Lochadoff.

"So I will; but what is this bundle of shawls?"

"This bundle of shawls is the fat, fair, large-footed Russian Katinka!" said Katinka, starting up; "but what did you say about my nose?"

"Now, by the body of Bacchus!" said Jakof, looking very sheepish.

"Do you hear me?" repeated the lady, "or are your ears as stuffed with the cotton I see peeping out of them as your mouth with lies?"

"My very excitable beauty," replied Jakof, backing a pace or two, "I said, touching your nose, that it was a Roxalana nose—the most beautiful of all noses."

"What is a Roxalana nose?" said Katinka, appealing to the rest of the party.

"A snub nose!"

"A pug nose!" answered a couple of mischievous voices.

"And do you maintain, now, that you ever saw as much of me in your life before as you have to-night?"

"Never!" said Jakof, in great confusion.

"Then how dared you say so?"

"I!" said Jakof, not knowing what to say; "why how do you know that I spoke of you?—There have been more than one Katinka upon the boards: the name is common enough, I hope."

"Oh! you would find fault with the name, now, would you?" said the irate beauty, and, making a snatch at his wig, in spite of the most scientific of fastenings, she whirled it aloft in triumph amidst the shouts of the rest of the party, and the cries of "Oh! oh! oh!—don't take it all; leave some for the Obrasoffs!"

At length the lady was pacified, and returned to her champagne; the wig was recovered when trampled out of curl, and the jest exhausted.

"Gospodine Lesseps!" said a servant.

"Oh," said Jakof, "you had better not admit him!"

"It is not very prudent," remarked another of the guests; but whilst they were deliberating, there burst upon them a rude voice preceding the full view of the burly painter's figure.

"So ho, gentlemen!—you are carousing here!" said Lesseps, who appeared a little excited: "what! do I see my friend, Jakof?"

No hilarious demonstrations of delight—such as he had been accustomed to hear, and such as it had become a sort of fashion to greet him with—hailed the entrance of the painter.

"You are dull over your cups, gentlemen, very dull; perhaps you have heard that I am going, and that makes you melancholy?"

The young guardsman, next to him, to whom Lesseps seemed familiarly to point his observation, decidedly cut him, turning, without deigning an answer, towards Jakof, and asking a question about the tails of his dogs.

"I had not the felicity of finding a trace of you to-day—not even a lock of your hair, though these tokens are more current amongst the fair than bank-notes amongst ourselves," said the painter, still jocosely, though somewhat disconcerted by his reception, and though the blood, rising to his forehead and tinging it just above his rugged eyebrows, shewed that he was chafing inwardly.

But no one noticed this jest of the painter's, who had almost learned to account himself witty, so long had he found it impossible to open his mouth without the interruption of a roar of laughter. As for Jakof, he answered him inanely. "Ah! . . ." and then turning his head, proceeded to reply with intense abstraction and interest to the guardsman's question,

that he always docked the tails of his puppies himself, having taken lessons from the English rat-catcher, and learned to bite them off with his teeth, the only approved method of performing the operation.

Lesseps sat down, and independently filled a tumbler to the brim wit h champagne, and then, with an air intended to convey at once aggravation and defiance, he sung the following snatch:—

> "Quatre Roussel had three hairs white,
> Two on the left temple, one on the right;
> And when he went his mistress to see,
> The rake, he jauntily plaited all three!"

"Hear me," said Lochadoff, who, having ventured at Durakoff's instigation on the madly dangerous frolic of personating the secret police, had felt peculiar awkwardness on being visited by a man ordered out of the empire, and who, being closely watched, might turn on him a scrutiny so perilous: but besides being of a naturally reckless temper, he felt an undefined sympathy with the banned artist. "Hear me," said Lochadoff, shaking him cordially by the hand; "you know, Lesseps, how we are all kept under the ferule; and so, frankly, I had rather you had not come; but once here—in for a penny, in for a pound—we shall be noted whether or not; so by the holy beard of the liquor-loving Noah, the first tippler in point of antiquity, as you are the first in capacity, we will drain a parting cup together."

"All the attendants but one are removed," chimed in Durakoff, "for a reason you will burst your jolly sides to hear, so we may talk freely."

"Well," said Lesseps, raising his voice, and twirling his moustachios, as he looked around, "in quitting this cursed country, which I profoundly despise, with

all belonging to it, there are only you two whom I would give a pinch of snuff ever to see again; you are the only two men in the empire, unless when you are quite sober, which is very rarely. As for talking, I am not afraid of being heard."

"Neither is the jester, the fool, nor the dwarf," sneered the guardsman, but in a whisper.

"What did you say, Sir?" asked Lesseps.

"I made a private observation to my friend, Sir," replied the guardsman, superciliously.

Lesseps frowned. But as a glass was refilled for him, and a seat offered him next to Katinka, he went through the ceremonies of introduction with a rude and grotesque gallantry; and his good-humour was partially restored, when Lochadoff whispered to him in a few words the adventure of Vasili Petrovitch.

"And now, my dear fellow," said Lochadoff, "first tell us how have you got into disgrace with the Emperor, you who were such a favourite."

"In this way. He was not inclined to hear the truth; and I was disposed to speak it, just as I am now; so I shall take leave to preface my narration by a little anecdote. You must know, gentlemen all, that I had a friend—a friend for whom I entertained, and still entertain the greatest affection; as good-looking, clever, and sensible a fellow as you would any of you wish to see. This friend, gentlemen, began life like Bacchus, seated on a barrel, which was strapped to the shoulders of his mother, the canteen-woman. He spent his boyhood, like myself, as a drummer, and in time he rose to be sergeant and fencing-master, and lastly to the dignity of an epaulette on the left shoulder at the taking of the Trocadero. At length he was sent, by some misunderstanding,

into a regiment of the royal guard; the officers of this regiment were all hopeful scions of that nobility which fled before the storms of the revolution and the empire, and their wars, to return and gather in the hay when the sun shone. Now, my deeply venerated friend was not noble enough, rich enough, or polished enough, for these fastidious gentlefolks. On the second day, they gave him the cut direct. Somewhat to their disappointment—because, when they agreed to hunt him out like a badger, they were prepared for his bite—he took no notice of it all the following day. The regiment was quartered in the environs of Paris; the colonel to whom the affair was reported, was going up that night; he sent to my friend to attend at his quarters on the following morning.

"At eleven my friend repaired thither. The colonel was taking his chocolate: he was an old *émigré*, who hated every thing connected with the *grande armée*.

"'Sir,' said he, without asking him to be seated, 'I have been informed of all that has passed. I was always doubtful of your exactly suiting the body of officers of my regiment; and I therefore cannot say that I so much regret the necessity which you must feel of immediately withdrawing from it.'

"'I am not aware of the necessity to which you allude, colonel,' replied my friend, coolly.

"'Oh! you are not, Sir,' said the colonel with profound disgust; 'must I dot your i's for you? I was anxious that there should be no discussion betwixt them and any person who had served the empire;—but after all, the men of the empire have no sympathy with cowardice;—in a word, you have allowed yourself to be grossly insulted.'

"'Colonel,' replied my friend, 'I have never in my life left any insult unpunished yet: perhaps you could specify.'

"'Sir,' said the colonel, 'I find you are lost to all sense of shame. Count A— and the Chevalier de B—, and my own nephew, all publicly turned their backs upon you yesterday; in short, if you do not quietly leave the regiment and the service, you shall be turned out of it, since you force me to speak so harshly.'

"'All these gentlemen have given me satisfaction.'

"'What! Count A—?'

"'I dangerously wounded him at nine this morning. The Chevalier de B— . . .'

"'God bless me!' said the colonel: and what of the Chevalier de B—'

"'I have just run him through the body: and your nephew—'

"'Good God!' said the colonel, 'what of my nephew!'

"'I must beg of you to excuse me, for it is half-past eleven; your nephew is waiting on the ground for me.'

"'What! butcher?' said the colonel. 'I forbid you: I place you under arrest.'

"'Then I will disgrace your nephew; and further, colonel, this letter is to ask my dismissal from the service. And then, when no longer bound by the rules of military subordination, a word from me to yourself.'

"They met: the nephew was buried the next day. The colonel in his phrenzy struck the sub-lieutenant with his horsewhip; and then, when he had left the service, was persuaded by his friends not to meet him

on the plea of inequality of rank. Perhaps some of you, gentlemen, might have felt disposed to do the same. But what does my worthy and esteemed friend? He walks into a public place where the colonel was, and squeezing his cheeks between his fists, he makes him open his mouth like a gaping fish, and then spits into it."

Here Lesseps, who, heightening his recital by the pantomime of action, seemed for a moment about to illustrate his meaning on the person of Jakof, paused for a moment.

"Well," said Durakoff, "and did the colonel fight, then?"

"He fought," replied Lesseps; "and as he had been one of the first fencers of his day, a terrible contest it was. They were both run through the body, and fell simultaneously. As for my friend, the sword had strangely slipped upon his fourth rib before it entered, ripping up the flesh like a plough in a fallow field, as I will shew you."

Lesseps, pulling open his shirt, shewed a terrible scar; and here the guardsman, having politely wished them all good evening, made his exit quietly.

"And now," continued Lesseps, "that our friend the dog-fancier is gone, and that Jakof does not follow him, he apparently emulating the hound that would never go till he was kicked out—"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Jakof.

"Now let us have a song! a jolly song! and then I will proceed with my story. Give me another glass of wine! Allow me, Madam, to kiss your lily hand and to drink to the health of your liege lord. I hope he is comfortable in the cellar; for, Madam, if under some circumstances husbands are considered worthy

of Heaven, they are worthy of a comfortable berth in this nether world, and where can a man be more happily located than in a wine-cellar?"

"Very true," said Katinka; "I don't pity him, he has kept me close enough."

"Come! come!" said Lesseps; "will no one give us a song? Then fill your glasses and here goes:

If the gods when disposing
Of earth and of sea,
Had been better advised, or
Sought counsel of me,
Where the rivers and oceans roll,
Red wine should be;
With the earth for a vineyard,
The seas for a bowl,
And my throat for a funnel
To bottle the whole!

"And now to my story. You want to know then, gentlemen, why your Emperor, the Emperor of all the Russias has fallen into disgrace with Lesseps, the painter. I'll tell you; because he is an empty-headed fool, because his empire is vastly larger than his wit."

Here all looked involuntarily to the doors.

"You must know that, as long as he was in a good humour, he seemed the only man one could talk freely to in his own empire, of which I now perceive the reason, which is, that he is the only man who dare answer you in the same spirit. But then he winces under the truth and does not like to hear it, and though Lesseps never minds telling a lie to pleasure a friend behind his back—though no one but himself dares say so—he never says what is untrue to a man's face to pleasure him, be he who he may.

"Now the Emperor asks me if his Invalides—the fellows who mount guard at the palace in bear-skin caps—are not fully equal to the Emperor's old guard—I mean *the* Emperor's—for you know, gentlemen, he was the real Emperor, after whom all other monarchs are like the princes of a masquerade."

"My dear fellow," said Lochadoff, "you forget your late Louis XVIII, with all the weight of legitimacy and of corpulence."

"Bah!" said Lesseps, with an expression of contempt; "a king of farce or pantomime beside the 'little corporal,' the 'king of fire,' the man of battles! Louis and his successor are a pair of Roi Dagoberts of the hunting song—King Dagobert, who you know,

> in days of yore,
> Once donned his shorts wrong side before,
> Which Saint Eloi did no sooner see,
> Than he said, 'Oh, Sire! it grieveth me
> That your Majesty so ill-breeched should be.'
> 'It is true,' quoth the King, 'I thought they felt tight,
> So we'll shift them about, and we'll put them on right."

"It is very funny," said Jakof; "but, my dear Lesseps, we might be convivial without all these dangerous political allusions."

"You are right," said Durakoff; "we do not know on what terms King Dagobert may be with our Court."

"Exactly," answered Jakof, in sober earnest.

"Who is afraid?" replied Lesseps. "Talk of other Kings, Emperors, or Princes, to me who have seen *the* Emperor! Why your Nicholas is a miserable parody on him!—a child with a paper cocked hat and a penny trumpet!"

"Hush! hush! hush! hush!" said all the auditors in a breath.

"Not I!" said the painter; "I will say my say. Why, your Emperor reminds me of the other verse of King Dagobert,

> who always wore
> A big sword of steel—in days of yore.
> So quoth St. Eloi, 'Oh! my King,
> If your foot should slip,
> And your Majesty trip,
> You will hurt yourself with that ugly thing.'
> 'It is true,' said the Monarch so good;
> 'Let us have a blunt broadsword of wood.'"

"Well, but your story?" said Lochadoff.

"Well then, for my story," replied the painter. "Your King Dagobert was vaunting his Invalides against *the* Emperor's Old Guard.

"'Now don't you think them better men?' said he.

"I answered nothing. 'Well,' he continued; 'they are as tall, as strong, as well dressed, as well drilled, more faithful, and braver—for, after all, ours beat them.'

"'Beat them!' said I; 'with the assistance of twenty degrees of frost, or three to one; but never otherwise. I grant you, Sire, that they are as well dressed, drilled, and disciplined—but to be as brave—they must not only have worsted lace and silver medals on the breasts, but a stout spirit within them; and, to be as strong, your Imperial Majesty must feed them on something better than rye bread and cabbage.'

"'Oh! but they have meat!' said the Emperor.

"'Oh, yes! as much in a month as I have seen an Englishman take at a mouthful. In short, they want hearts in their bodies and beef in their bellies!'

"The Emperor did not laugh as usual. At length, for he had come, I believe, for the purpose of giving me a subject from Napoleon's history, he said, 'You have thought of nothing.'

"'Not yet, Sire.'

"'Then let it be his flight from Russia,' said his Majesty, maliciously.

"'Sire,' answered I, 'I know a better subject.'

"'What is it?'

"'Napoleon on the raft at Tilsit—the Emperor, your brother, on his right hand, the Emperor of Austria on his left, for they both yielded him precedence, and Napoleon commencing an anecdote, 'When I was lieutenant of artillery at the siege of Toulon.' The Emperor turned upon his heel, and so it happens, gentlemen, that I have received orders to quit the empire in eight-and-forty hours."

"I wish," said Lochadoff, "he would serve us all so."

"My dear fellow," said Durakoff, "who would then be left to serve him?"

"But the best joke is to come," continued Lesseps. "I have money owing to me, more than would fill a sledge. I have been round to-day, and not a soul would pay me, or even see me—all knowing that I must be off to-morrow."

"A good joke you call it!" said Durakoff.

"Oh! not their refusal to pay me—though, confound them, I ought to be thankful too for their utterly disgusting me with a country where the ruler is like a mangy dog over a bone, and is yet a prince compared to all his subjects. The joke is the following. You all know that I have committed two great follies in my life; the one was coming to

Russia, the other marrying there. Well then, my German wife has taken it into her head to come with me to Paris, and has got her passport all ready. Now of all the people to whom I went collecting cash, as I have told you, I saw only one, and that person gave me a suggestion quite as valuable."

"As valuable as money?" said Durakoff.

"To the full," replied Lesseps. "Imagine that I was requested to take with me a very pretty interesting woman, a foreigner married to a Russian, and seeking to escape from the country. She flying from a husband rendered it necessary that, as a bond of sympathy, I should be running away from a wife; so, instead of starting to-morrow at sunset with my spouse, I am off, *en aimable scélérat* at daybreak with an interesting substitute."

"Have you seen her?"

"No; but any change must be a gain."

"And if your wife follows?"

"She can't. I am going to make use of her passport."

"I thought that Jakof had paid you most liberally."

"He was out three times to-day, that I called and sent. After all, he is no worse than the rest, and I therefore regret that, as I must be off to-morrow, I shall have no opportunity of meeting any body else, as I have vowed to twist the nose off the first shuffler I meet."

"How very funny," said Jakof, "but you mistake, my friend; I told you that I was about to send to you to-night—I can pay you at once, Sir: what have you painted for me?"

"May the devil burn me if I remember!" replied Lesseps."

"The one is a scene in the Pyrenees—some mule-

teers—two mules and a donkey, threading a Salvator-Rosa-like path; the other is a portrait of myself—let me see, what did we agree for?"

"Money and fair words I suppose," replied the painter, "but how much, or how many, I cannot tell."

"You must say," said Jakof.

"Well, suppose we take five hundred roubles apiece for each of the mules, and the jack-ass; and for the portrait half the sum."

"Half for his portrait!—rate him lower than a donkey!"

"By no means: but the former would be the portrait; the latter only the copy of a portrait," replied Lesseps.

"And then," said Katinka maliciously, "there is my portrait which he painted for you."

"I don't remember it," said the painter.

Oh! Jakof does," said Durakoff, "for he was boasting of it."

"Well! well;" said Jakof, taking out his pocket book with a sigh.

"Katinka, do you take punch or champagne? iced?" said Lochadoff.

"Madam," interrupted Lesseps, "I drink to your spouse in the cellar."

"Oh! iced by all means," replied Katinka.

"Which," said Lochadoff, "the champagne or your husband."

"Gentlemen," said Durakoff, "a brilliant idea suggests itself," and, initiating the company into his plot, he led them into an adjoining room, and then quitted them.

"Look," said Lochadoff, taking out a hundred rouble note, with which Vasili Petrovitch had attempted to bribe him in the character of the gendarme, and

rolling it up to light his cigar with, "look! Vasili Petrovitch gave me this for taking care of his lady."

"What is the husband's is the wife's," said Katinka snatching it away.

"By this time the door of the next room was thrown open, and there stood Vasili Petrovitch, hand-bound, blindfolded, and barefooted, with Durakoff beside him, making pantomimic gestures to enjoin silence.

"Vasili Petrovitch," said Durakoff in a rough feigned voice: "is that the trader Vasili Petrovitch?"

"It is he, your Excellency," replied Lochadoff, in a tone of profound deference.

"My lord—" said Vasili.

"Hush! speak not till thou art spoken to. Vasili Petrovitch, tell all thou knowest of this matter, and beware how thou dost hold back or falsify one syllable. You write down what he says."

"What matter, your Excellency?" said Vasili Petrovitch.

"What matter! well, truly that is modest. Art come here to interrogate me, prisoner?"

"Oh! most merciful Lord," replied Vasili; "I am only too ready to obey your excellency, but how can I unless I am informed in what?"

"How!" said Durakoff, "supposing thou knowest nothing treasonable after all, am I to be so negligent of the Emperor's service as to betray his secrets? Thou wilt not speak? I ask thee for the last time."

"Oh!" said Vasili in terrible perplexity, "if you would only tell me what you wish to know!"

"Then," said Durakoff sternly, "apply the red hot irons to his feet, and sear him to the quick."

"Oh mercy! mercy!" roared Vasili in an agony of terror, "I will say anything."

But he was pitilessly seized, and, from a wine-cooler, in which a goodly number of bottles were arrayed, to prevent the necessity of any intrusion of domestics, two or three lumps of ice were rubbed against the soles of Vasili's feet, whose imagination was so impressed with the idea of being burned, that his shrieks obliged them partially to gag him, whilst Katinka clapped her hands with delight and laughed outright.

"What was that?—do I hear *her* voice?" said Vasili Petrovitch.

"His head wanders," said Durakoff; "put him into an ice-cellar, and let him remain there till we next call him up for interrogation."

Vasili was lifted aloft, and carried several times round the room, and at length deposited in the wine-cooler.

"Oh! Oh! I am on hot coals again. Oh mercy! mercy!"

"Nonsense, you are ankle deep in the ice-slush," replied Lochadoff, it is not comfortable to lie down in, I grant you, but you can stand up, it will do your burnt feet good."

"Oh, your nobility! you are the gendarme officer; I know you by your voice. Oh, shall I ever get away from here?"

"Who knows? You should have answered his Excellency."

"Oh, 'tis awfully cold," said Vasili, lifting up first one leg, and then the other, like a dancing bear."

"And how long am I to remain here?"

"Till you are next called up."

"And when will that be?" asked the trader piteously.

"I don't know. Perhaps in April next."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE pale sister who had watched beside Blanche through her contagious malady, in the place of meeting of the sect over which the brickmaker presided, was a wealthy and noble lady, who, becoming deeply interested in her strange story, continued actively to befriend her, though for many reasons shrinking from recognition.

She had committed Blanche to the care of the German widow of an officer, a woman to whom personal sorrow had taught kindness and compassion, and who was besides discreet, unprying, and trustworthy. Living in a retired situation, she had hitherto gained her livelihood by devoting her time to an insane lady, with the care of whom the immediate relations had not only entrusted, but to whom they all appeared utterly to have abandoned her—all excepting one, and this was the pale sister, who was so distantly connected that she could hardly have claimed the right to exercise the active vigilance she did over her destiny, but for the generosity with which she doubled the somewhat parsimonious allowance made by the lunatic's guardians, so that the widow should have no temptation to resort to any

other occupation which might divert her attention and solicitude from this one object.

Here Blanche had spent the period of her convalescence and of her confinement—here the sister had solaced her with sympathy and inspired her with hope, and the widow soothed her with attentive kindness. The woman whose reason some terrible calamity had overthrown, inspired all the interest with which youth, and gentleness, and the traces of beauty, invest unfortunates in her situation.

Her insanity had assumed the form of tender, dreamy melancholy. Most frequently lost to all surrounding objects, she would muse for hours, and then her eyes would fill with tears and distil large burning drops, whilst her countenance was serene and almost happy in expression, like a moment's heavy rain with a sunny sky which is not perceptibly clouded—such as the reader may remember to have seen once in the course of many summers—an anomaly startling not in its own aspect, but on account of the rare and unnatural contrast which it offers.

And then, whenever she awoke from the entangled world of thought, in which a bewildering drowsiness seemed to yield repose to her faculties, she busied herself with mingled joy and misgiving in restless preparation both of her person and of the apartments for the reception of some beloved one expected, yet, alas! who never came.

But, withal, she was not insensible to the kindness of those around her; and still more impressed by sympathy and sorrow, so that a great part of her time she had learned to spend by Blanche's side.

There was only one day in every month—one

unvarying day on which, towards evening, she seemed to rouse under the influence of a painful excitement, and in the morning Blanche never saw her, though the shrieks and ravings of the lunatic rang through the house in the wild paroxysms of her insanity.

And on these occasions, as regularly as they recurred, the pale sister, with a beautiful devotion to her suffering kinswoman, was always closeted with her through the live-long day and night, till the unfortunate maniac at length found refuge in sleep, and then she left her, so exhausted that she often fainted over the cup of cordial wine which the widow hold prepared to refresh her after her long and trying vigil.

After these terrible four-and-twenty hours were passed, the violence of the patient always gave way to a natural reaction, and she became as gentle as before, except that she dreamed much, and shed more tears than usual.

Now the day on which Blanche went with the old sectarian to reclaim from his brother the deposit of Mattheus, was the day of the mad woman's periodical fury. The widow had received a message to repair immediately on urgent business to the house of an influential personage, whom her protectress had interested in Blanche's fate. The pale sister had not yet come, but she had never failed to do so, and it was not till towards midday that the patient became violent. The widow, therefore, left her bolted in an apartment lighted only by a skylight, and the walls and flooring of which, being padded, left no means of injurious self-violence to her charge.

The mad woman watched with intense anxiety for her accustomed visitant; and when, at length, hour

after hour passed away without her arrival, her anxiety gave way to fury. Hitherto, during these fits, the pale sister had always been there to struggle with and restrain her, so that the fastenings of the door, which opened outwards, had never been tried. Everyone knows that the excitement of insanity, like that of anger, if it does not permanently increase the strength of the human body, still often fearfully augments it for the moment by concentrating into a brief period the power of exertion, leaving afterwards the exhausted frame proportionally weakened. With this ephemeral force of the maniac, the patient burst open the door of her chamber, and when Blanche, returning from her fruitless visit to the house of the perfidious Vasili, hastened to her child, there stood the mad woman in the middle of the room.

Her hair was dishevelled and floating in disorder, her garments hung in rags about her body, her eye sparkled with the wild and fitful brightness of insanity, her brows were contracted into a fearful distortion.

"Hush!" she said, putting her finger to her lip, "he sleeps—"

"He sleeps!—my child!" shrieked Blanche, who with a terrible foreboding rushed to the bedside of her sleeping infant; but there it lay in its deep, calm, dreamless sleep, its cheeks like the budding rose, and its little bosom regularly heaving.

"Oh, thank God!" said the mother with unutterable gratitude.

"He sleeps!—hush! hush!" said the maniac, "rude stranger, you will awaken him!—it is not yet the hour—the troops have not yet beat the morning

drum—not that he awakens easily—you may pass to and fro and stamp upon his grave, and he says not even, 'don't disturb me!'

"If he were easily disturbed, you know, those hammers would awaken him—knock, knock, knock, knock!—do you hear them?—did you ever hear those sounds before! Oh yes, it is our wedding day to-morrow, they are nailing up the drapery and festoons, and the platform for the orchestra—poor fellows, they were early at their work.

"The platform—oh! what bloody band is to play on it? What do I see uprising there—oh God! oh God!—five gibbets! One for Pestel! one for Kahovski! one for Bestoujef, and one for Mouravief! One, two, three, four,"—and the maniac counted on her fingers—"but who is the fifth for? Merciful Heaven! not for him!—oh no! no! no!—men, living men, with bodies sensible to pain, and with immortal souls, are not thus hanged up by the neck like dogs!"

"Poor sufferer!" said Blanche, "oh what a world of trouble!" And then, pressing the mad woman's hand, she kneeled to induce her to kneel too, and pray according to her wont.

"What!" said the maniac, "pray!—pray! when even the Saviour has refused to save"—and then, quoting the words of the mad wife in Krasinski's beautiful drama, "The Infernal Comedy," she raised her hands despairingly towards Heaven, "Oh! he has seized with both hands his cross, and cast it into the abyss! Hark! dost not hear that cross, the hope of the wretched, crashing as it falls from star to star!—it is breaking, and it scatters through the universe the fragments of its wreck!—"

Here she covered her eyes for a few moments with her hand, and the looks of Blanche wandered anxiously from this sad spectacle to her sleeping child.

At length the maniac stared again wildly around her, and her thoughts again reverted into their former all-absorbing train.

"And they, what do they here, why do their drums beat? Why do their arms shine so brightly? Why dance the black and white plumes? And why glares the scarlet in the morning air? Oh God! all those brave men, who bear themselves so gallantly, will not stand by with arms in their avenging hands and sanction a deliberate assassination? If you want life, —if you are quite remorseless,—then take theirs—'twas they persuaded him,—they all rebelled in deed as well as thought,—and if there be devotion in the hearts of all of them there was no pity for his danger, and there is blood on some of their hands, but not on his. Hang them! but not the husband of my bosom, not my soul's love, not him! you shall not touch one hair of his blessed head—for the sacred affection of a wife protects him.

"Reflect, Sire," continued the maniac, throwing herself at Blanche's feet, "reflect! you are young yourself,—you have a wife who loves you,—you have children whom you love, you are one of the earth's demigods, you have power, you are victorious—oh then why not look down and pity? Your rule is absolute now over sixty millions, there are sixty million lives, any of which you may extinguish by a dash of your imperial pen! and I implore you, Sire, only for one,—there is only one I care for,—that is not my own, and that pitiful one you will grant me? For when a beggar, Sire, stands by your ample store and asks

one kopek in the name of Christ, who can refuse it him? Oh, Sire! that life your heart will not deny me, consider that I am a fond, weak, loving, woman. No—no— oh God! let me rise up, I have profaned those knees which should only bend to thee—this is not the Emperor, this is not Nicolai Paulovitch! this is the hangman."

Blanche made a vain effort to pacify her: she continued with wild vehemence, "This is the hangman, the vile, loathsome hangman, who is to tie the murderous rope about that neck which nothing but these arms ought ever to encircle. Make way, make way, *you* are the hangman, but where is the Emperor? Show me to the Emperor! Show me, gentlemen, I implore of you to the Emperor.... But hark!—it is too late, oh God! oh God! he is dangling aloft, he has fallen once with the breaking rope; they have tied him up with his broken limb, which hangs suspended loosely from his body, just like his tender body as it dangles by the fatal cord from that foul tree!.... look, look, look!" and the maniac, grasping Blanche by the hand, led her to the windows and then, turning round, and looking into her face, she said, "Ah, now I know you! so you are come at last, Madame Obrasoff, what then—if you will save him from himself,—what then? Though I am the injured wife, and you the adulterous mistress. Oh save him! save him! save him!" and with a wild shriek she kneeled again and seized Blanche by the hem of her garment. Then rising, she continued wildly,

"Hark, hark! to the hammers, knock, knock—knock! Oh they will waken him, and he sleeps so sweetly now, outwearied, on his dungeon straw—look,

lo, he dreams! he murmurs out a name. Oh God! it is not mine—it is not his fond wife's,—it is thine, vile woman! thine murderess! for oh! thou hast not saved him—oh trust her not, trust her not! turn not, my husband, from my fond embrace, to hide thy head on her false bosom, for the night that thou were first doomed to lie a cold corpse with thy warm blood curdled—that night, with her plumes and diamonds, the wretched woman smiled in the Emperor's presence! She, in his murderous presence smiled her murdering smile,—oh I have heard it all!

"For thou didst murder him, woman! say not nay. There was a time when first he wooed me: if I had asked him then, as afterwards in vain upon my knees I did beseech him to fly these dangerous men and their conspiracies—there was a time he would have listened to me; but thou didst win his constant heart away, and then that heart—filled with another love—was deaf to my entreaties. How didst thou win it from me?—tell me then pale sorceress?—and yet—oh God! you say the sentence is pronounced—oh then forgive me if I have spoken harshly, forgive me gentle lady, so you can only, only, only, only save him....

"Oh thou wouldst fly from me!—stop, stop! adulterous murderess, stop!—knowest thou not that he is dead, and thou art dead, and I am dead—and here below, where we both howl for light, thou art doomed to suffer for ever thus."

And here the maniac flew like a wild beast at Blanche, whose enfeebled frame bent like a reed, as she was borne to the ground before she had time to call for succour, a call which would, if heard, have

been vain in a house where the only servant was accustomed to the periodical ravings of the lunatic.

"Now, look you," continued the mad woman, pulling loose her victim's hair, and twisting her fingers into it, "in this manner it is doomed that I shall drag thee for ever and ever through the long night of time. Ha! ha! it is pleasant to hear, as I have so often heard before, thy head bound over the ground as I dash thee upon it—for this, this is the ninth, and on the ninth he died!"

Here the maniac paused; and Blanche, stunned, breathless, and affrighted, had not even strength to call for help.

"Now, tell me, tell me," continued the wife of the conspirator, "how didst thou win his true and constant heart from me? Let me look at thee—my form was surely taller and more graceful—my hair more long and silky—my skin as fair—my eyes more soft and bright—and yet—and yet he left me for thee! What is, then, this expression that men rave about? Where are these changing hues of the rainbow which they say are in thine eyes?—I see them not. Why say they that thy step is like the fluttering of the butterfly—thy voice like the Æolian harp? Why did he call thee Euphemia—the fairy-like, ethereal, and impalpable Euphemia! who didst look as if fed in thy grossest meal on the egg of the humming-bird, and the bloom collected from the fruit,—as if thy thirst was slaked with dew stored up in the chalice of a flower? What saw he in thee that was not in me?"

At this moment, Blanche's infant, at length awaked from its sleep by the mad woman's violence, turned on its side, and cried aloud,

"Oh God! a child—a child! the babe's mouth

answers me! Oh, therein lay thy spell, then, sorceress, in that child! Oh, merciful father, thou didst leave me barren, and didst give a child to this adulteress—and thus I lost his love! Ha, woman! then it was not thou, it was this babe; if so—if thou hast heard of Herod's massacre, where they dashed out young children's brains against the pavement—look thou here!"

At these words, Blanche—feeble, and stunned, and bleeding—started to her feet with a wild, heart-rending shriek; and no sooner was the infant in the maniac's hands, than the terror of the affrighted mother braced her unstrung nerves, and, with the energy of the lioness, whose whelps a serpent is enfolding, the fainting woman bounded forward, and also seized her babe.

The tender infant was thus precariously placed betwixt the malignant strength of insanity and the tenacious grasp of a mother holding on to her child. Another instant might have seen the judgment of Solomon realized on its person, only that just as there arose, galvanically, as it were, a mightier force to brace the mother's nerve, so her instinctive perception was more rapid—she loosed the child—she seized the maniac's throat—she cast her down with preternatural strength—that woman whom two strong men could not hold when in her paroxysms; and then, snatching up her babe, she fled like the hunted deer.

In the next chapter it will be explained why the pale sister had, for the first time, staid away.

CHAPTER IX.

THE Prince Isaakoff had been ten days at Moscow; in four more he was to return. Horace, who had agreed to follow him thither on the third day, still lingered behind, although he often wished he had accompanied him; and, although he had only to call for horses to fulfil this promise, he lingered—unable to escape from the fascination which Nadeshta exercised over him through her beauty, her enthusiasm, and her touching confidence. And then he longed to break the spell, because his gratitude, his admiration, and the absorbing interest with which she had inspired him—the vivid consciousness of the impassable gulph which divided the Count de Montressan from the slave-girl—led him for the first time to dread that he might be tempted to villany which would have filled him with remorse, or folly, of which he felt the bare idea ridiculous.

Now the excitement of a strangely unnatural position when, in the presence of approaching death, he stood face to face with a creature of angelic beauty, whose living features seen for the first time were yet familiar to him; for whose misfortune his sympathies had just been strongly roused by his interview with her brother; and who was about to die in her attempt

to save him —had all conjoined to lead him to a solemn declaration, which—in the same sincerity—in the enthusiasm of his gratitude for their deliverance, he had repeated when they stood on the bank in safety; a declaration to do that which was socially impossible, and which, notwithstanding its solemnity, in the sober moments of his reason, he could only regard as a rhapsody of its temporary aberration. And yet he felt an undefined dissatisfaction at the very reasons which, when reviewed, not only served to palliate his course of action, but seemed to leave no other reasonably open to him.

This noble girl, it was true, had saved his life, and, in a moment of transport, he had promised that which was clearly impossible—to make her his wife—a promise so frequent in its violation by men of birth towards their inferiors, as almost to be excusable when not made with premeditated guile, only that here, the life which she had devoted to save his gave it a character of more than usual sanctity. But then, on the other hand, the Count was about to rescue her and those dearest to her from their miserable situation. He had already tested the gratitude of the Duchess by writing to implore her to watch over the destiny of the wife of Mattheus; Mattheus, and Nadeshta herself, he was determined to redeem from their slavery, not only at the expense of all that wealth so lightly won, but of his own patrimonial fortune if required, or by his blood, if wealth was insufficient to effect his object; but as for marrying—it was too preposterous! and yet, how strange that, if it had been possible to link that beautiful and ingenuous peasant-girl a gem, and not a gem in its unpolished roughness, but only one unflawed by contact with the

world—if it had been possible to link to the genealogical tree, even of her tyrant, whom he now despised, that beauteous maiden, Horace felt then, for the first time, that he, who had railed so bitterly against matrimony, would have hastened to secure her as a prize that some one might have ravished from him.

Horace, in fact, felt that he had the misfortune to love, where alike his honour as a man and his self-dignity imperatively forbade the gratification of his passion. That, however, which touched him most was the confident simplicity with which Nadeshta had evidently accepted his wild promise, without ever for an instant doubting its validity or his intention to fulfil it.

Always singularly isolated at school by her consciousness of the contempt with which her companions would have treated her if cognizant of her real station; and since then cut off from all communion by her utter want of sympathy with all surrounding her, she had lived, as we have heard from her own avowal, in the past and the future—such as she had gathered the one from books; and gilded the other in her warm impetuous imagination. The momentary disenchantment occasioned by the condition of her brother and the conduct of Horace had been effaced by his subsequent behaviour; and the indefinite illusions she nursed so long, had resumed all their influence, based upon a stronger semblance of reality.

She only saw in Horace—young, generous, noble, wealthy, and accomplished—one of that class of Western men, not only lords, but masterless themselves, whose eloquence and whose blood

have been poured forth so freely to advocate the equality of all human rights; for, alas! Nadeshta's enthusiasm turned over unobserved the more numerous pages which record the bigotry and narrow selfishness of caste, struggling to increase all trammels but its own.

And here he came like the errant knights of old, who broke through the tangled meshes of the destiny most hopelessly interwoven with misfortune, or rather like a guardian angel, to snatch her from the darkness of despair. He had enthusiastically promised, at any sacrifice, to free, not herself alone, but all connected with her, from their ignominious bondage. She saw and felt that he loved her; and he had said that he would marry her—his word was passed—that bond, among the Western men—that treble bond of all the chivalrous class of which he was a noble scion.

What marvel then that Nadeshta, in her simplicity, never doubted! And, in truth, this marriage was the last object that occupied her thoughts, filled so entrancingly with her love, the salvation of her brother, and the fulfilment of those dreams of wandering through the lands and scenes of her unceasing aspirations, not only free as a wild bird, but with Horace and Mattheus.

Horace, who loved, be it remembered, felt strangely disquieted at the idea of disturbing his own image from the pedestal on which this enthusiastic girl had raised it in her thoughts; and so—ever resolved to break the charm—yet when face to face with her, he yielded to the influence of the hour; and thus every meeting had only served to strengthen an impression which he felt to be so fatal.

Sometimes, indeed, after these interviews, Horace had looked with envy on the moujiks at the cottage doors, and wished that fate had placed him in their humble station—at least, if they had not been slaves; for then what happiness in a life spent with Nadeshta, unembittered by all thought of the world's scorn and ridicule, and by all consciousness of derogation!

But hence arose, however, the reflection that, if he could have changed places with a peasant, would not Nadeshta in the superiority of her education and her knowledge have met his love with scorn? And then, was the most passionate love of women worthy of any sacrifices?—That love, which, even when sincere, they call up like the emotions of a mighty actress, who, for the moment, identifies her being with the feeling which she casts off with her stage attire; and which even in utter coldness of heart they can simulate with the most deceptive pathos; and here his thoughts recurred to the sad story of the conspirator, and to the Obrasoffs.

In this frame of mind, Horace sought out Nadeshta —still incapable of varying in all the generous resolutions he had formed; but steeled at length to speak the first words which he had ever uttered to shake illusions he was determined to destroy. If then, after clearly learning his resolution, the slave-girl, rendered free, should choose to follow him with her unaspiring love, his great name was unsullied, and his conscience satisfied.

But, first snatching his hat, he walked up and down before the mansion in an agitation which he himself thought ridiculous — profoundly ridiculous!—when he, the Count de Montressan, the experienced man of

the world, was going into the presence of a village beauty.

He turned the angle of the building, and there stood Nadeshta before him. She was equipped for a journey. Two rough-looking horses were harnessed to one of the light country carts, used indeed by the gentry in the terrific cross-roads; and a very old peasant, miserably clad, stood ready to drive them.

The steward, doubtful how to act with regard to Nadeshta, and perfectly sensible that the Prince considered her as the attraction which kept his visitor in the autumnal desolation of his country-seat, dared not refuse her the vehicle and horses which she had imperatively demanded, although he did not think it necessary to show any good-will in their selection.

Nadeshta greeted the Count with unusual coldness; but then her thoughts were evidently pre-occupied by a letter which she was re-perusing.

"Nadeshta!" said Horace, "what is this? Where are you going?"

"I am summoned to go immediately," replied Nadeshta, "I fear to the bed-side of my earliest friend."

"Is it far?"

"Forty versts."

"These horses will never drag you forty versts. The roads are dreadful."

"Then," said Nadeshta, coldly and resolutely, "when they break down, I must walk the rest."

"But," said Horace, "I have the command of my host's stable. Will you not let me drive you where you wish to go!"

"Oh yes," replied Nadeshta.

"Had you forgotten all that I owed to you? All

the deep interest that I feel. Why did you not apply to me?"

"I could not ask, unless you offered."

"This is unkind; have I not proffered my services the moment I knew your wishes?"

"Have I not accepted the moment you proffered them?"

"And do you desire to go immediately?"

"This instant," replied Nadeshta, with all the imperious haughtiness of a Princess or a beauty.

"Bring out directly," said Horace, "the lightest droshky, and the four best horses in the stable—the four we have driven English fashion."

"The droshky will be dashed to atoms in our roads, my Lord," said Johann obsequiously, "if you drive with any speed; no spring carriage will stand it, —unless you take the landau suspended above the trunks of two pliant birch saplings."

"You are right—then get it ready; and let us have six horses abreast and a driver with his axe. If it breaks down, he will cut a young tree and repair it."

In a few minutes the vehicle was prepared. The wind was cold and piercing—the sky, dark and cloudy, threatened a premature snow-storm.

"You will be cold," said Horace; and he threw his cloak, lined with costly sable around Nadeshta's shoulders. She mechanically thanked him; and, throwing it down, wrapped it with as much nonchalance about her feet as if she had been an Empress.

"Now drive—drive fast," said she.

The driver of this new team was the Starost, whose cruelty Horace had concealed at Nadeshta's entreaty; and as he turned his face towards them when he got on

his box, Horace was involuntarily startled at the countenance which was terribly impressed on his memory from the fact of his having last seen it glaring upon him, with diabolical malignity, when he lay hopelessly imbedded in the moss.

"I hear! I hear!" replied the vigorous old man; and he urged his horses at a ruinous pace, impelled alike by his wish to obey Nadeshta, to whom he owed her companion's late forbearance, and by the satisfactory idea that he was injuring his Lord's cattle without fear of punishment.

So jolting was the motion of the vehicle as it was rapidly dragged along, notwithstanding its rude springs, that all conversation was impossible till the driver stopped to breathe his horses; and then Horace found Nadeshta incomprehensibly absorbed in her own thoughts, uncommunicative, and silent.

Again they hurried forward; and, at length, in the deep rutty road, in two feet of mud, in the midst of a dark pine forest, again the foaming horses could only drag the vehicle through at a snail's pace.

Here the Starost turned round on his seat, and addressed Nadeshta in Russ.

"Hear me, daughter: some strange sorrow has come over thee. Our people, who have learned to watch thy countenance as the sun in harvest time, have all seen it—so have I. Thou art not, and yet thou art, more than one of us. Thou hast the science and the tongue of the foreigner: but yet we are not blind. Somehow, it is this man hath made thee sad. Say only the word, and I throw the Niemetz under the carriage wheels, and crush the life from his accursed body. I have seen

the Lord's look at him: it will not anger him much—it will be accident: at worst, Siberia—and this will shortly be as bad. Say only the word, daughter!"

"Hush, brother!" replied Nadeshta; "thy thoughts are always of violence: have a care lest thou perish violently. Now I order thee, drive on, drive speedily."

"Well, well, 'tis all one, not even thanks!" grumbled the old savage; and with his hoarse voice he encouraged his horses to drag the vehicle more speedily through the slough.

"What does he say?" asked Horace.

"Nothing intended for your ear," replied Nadeshta. "The Starost, who has long learned contempt of equals, hate and mistrust of superiors, has no more confidence in foreigners; and in his untutored prejudice, the stern old slave is right."

The horses having got out of the hollow road, here put forth their speed, and interrupted the observation of the wondering Horace. At length they paused again, and Nadeshta said,

"You have expressed curiosity to know whither and to whom, and wherefore, I am going this hurried journey, on which you have, of your own free will, accompanied me. Well, listen; it is not, after all, unfitting that you should hear, Count Horace."

This "Count" struck harshly and gratingly on her companion's ear; but, without allowing him time to speak, she continued:

"Know then that I had, that I have now, a friend—a person with whom some of my school years were spent in intimacy. She is young, attractive in person, high-born, and wealthy; she is generous and sincere.

I remember her when her heart, overflowing with its kindly merriment, reminded one of the birds that flutter on the branches in the bright spring sun, when, inspiring all who hear, they pour out in one gush of melody their joyous notes. I remember, for alas! it is not long to remember, a month or two ago, when she was admired of all, and when, joined to her natural graces, her rank, and her large fortune—without which those graces are nothing in men's eyes,—would have allowed her to command almost any alliance in the empire. I remember, when there was not one who might have touched her young heart but would have been proud of her preference. Alas! she dreamed like me; and no wonder, for we had indulged one dream together, seeing and despising her own countrymen, and regardless of the factitious brilliancy which gilds their selfish, servile meanness. She dreamed that foreigners were all that our Muscovites are not; attributing to slavery—for all but one within this empire are slaves, with the exception of such as I, who are the slaves of slaves—attributing to slavery that which is inherent in man's nature.

"Ignorant, as I then was, of what we have learned so bitterly, that custom and self-love, and pride and prejudice, impose an equal servitude, and corrupt as certainly as that which weighs upon us all,—driving out every noble sentiment from the heart to take refuge on the lips,—this poor, misguided girl, Count Horace, guileless, without ambition, open as the day at noon—she who had scorned to share the fortune of the powerful, the opulence of the high among her people—she gave confidingly, without reserve, her young and pure affections, and her maiden love to a stranger—she cast her vast fortune, and her affection

as a daughter and a sister, as dross into the balance, offering to sacrifice them all to him, to fly with him whithersoever he guided!

"Well, what did this man of nice honour and of ancient name—this man who had led her on with vows of love to pour out all her gentle soul in vows of reciprocal love? I will tell you what he did; I will explain his infamy. By a cruel jest, he made that tender and confiding woman a scorn, a by-word, a thing to be trampled by the envious ridicule of her peers—he cast her wantonly to earth when clinging fondly to him, to leave her with a broken heart, and bruised and wounded spirit, in her incurable despair! But look, if you would know all, read this;" and Nadeshta, giving him two letters at the same time, called sternly to the Starost to slacken the pace into which he was again urging the jaded horses; for they had turned from the heavy cross-road on to a broad paved way, bordered on each side by rows of oak, forming an avenue along which benches of stone were scattered, indicating their proximity to some habitation.

"Good God!" said Horace with a start, and overwhelmed with confusion, "these are my letters to the Obrasoffs!—these are the two most wily and deceitful women in Christendom, Nadeshta. They were seeking to deceive me!"

"Then," said Nadeshta, "to that suspicion, to the thought that he might be deceived, the blind, mean self-love of this man has sacrificed my gentle Anna!"

"How," said Horace, "this is very strange. Was I mistaking, or are you? Where are we going? It is impossible that I can go to the Obrasoffs, though, it is true, they must be still at Peterhoff."

"In ten minutes more you will stand in your victim's presence," said Nadeshta.

"It is impossible, Nadeshta. Anna Obrasoff has imposed upon your gentle nature."

"Anna Obrasoff is dying!"

"Dying!" repeated Horace, his heart filled with remorse and doubt. "Dying!—oh, God! was I deceived? Stop, stop! it is impossible that I should face the mother or the daughter!"

"Hark," said Nadeshta, "Count Horace, if there be any pity in your soul you shall follow me into that house to see the sorrow you have caused. If not, my fate is desperate, on every side despair darkens around me, shutting all outlets. If there were a rising of the slaves to-morrow, I, with this woman's arm, would seize the axe or the torch. So, if you are remorseless—I call to our driver—this slave, oppressed into ferocity, and he will throw your body beneath the carriage wheels, and crush the life out of the felon heart that seeks to fly the ruin it has made. Was not Anna's fate bright enough, mine full enough of terror, that you should change her happiness to desolation, that you should wring the last hope from my misery?"

"Hear me, Nadeshta!" said Horace, "do not talk so wildly. Hear me, dear Nadeshta, if what you say be true—if you be not imposed upon,—then I have dealt very cruelly, so after all I follow you whether the deceived or the deceiver."

"On, on, on, on!" said Nadeshta, and in a few minutes more they stand before the country-house of the Obrasoffs.

The glass doors intended for summer are all shut, the bleak wind, which whirls the withered leaves in eddies, howls at them for admission; no human

being is attracted by the sound of the carriage wheels: all is silent; the house seems tenantless and abandoned.

The Starost alights and rings—an interval elapses without answer; nothing is heard but the hard breathing of the panting horses, as the steam from their foaming sides rises visibly into the frosty air.

"The house is uninhabited," said Nadeshta.

"Not so," replied the driver, "I saw the smoke curling from several chimneys. The door you see is open though the lock wants oiling."

"Let us go in," said Nadeshta, "something has happened here."

All the doors along the passage are thrown wide open excepting one, which moves at the sound of their footsteps; a serving maid, in her village costume, utters an exclamation of surprise, and, pushing it quite open, half invites them to enter. There is a look of such profound awe, such unspeakable terror, expressed in her countenance, the sight of black heaped upon a table, and the glimpse of a figure habited in the same sable hue are, under the peculiar circumstances of their visit, so appalling, that Nadeshta and Horace press past her with one accord, and they stand in the presence of the youngest daughter, who is trying on a suit of mourning before the glass.

"Feodora, Feodora!" almost shrieked Nadeshta, in a tône at once interrogatory and full of agonising anxiety.

"Ah Nadeshta, at last!" said Feodora, turning and displaying the same calm, dreamy, impassible countenance as ever, and in the same cold, quiet, manner, "and the Count de Montressan—I did not know *he* was expected."

"Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna! where is, where is Anna?"

"Anna lives, she has been these few days delirious—she has had the fever,—she is better now."

"She lives!" said the slave girl.

"And Madame Obrasoff?" said Horace eagerly, his eye still wandering over the black.

"Oh, did *she* invite you?" said Feodora quietly—"pray be seated—but she cannot see you, Sir—mamma is dead."

"Dead!" said Horace, who felt the blood curdle in his veins and his knees stagger under him, whilst Nadeshta stood motionless with horror, so astounding was the intelligence, so appalling the unfeeling indifference of the daughter, whose unimpressionable idiotcy of mind her silent reserve and a glance beaming with intellect had hitherto concealed.

"Dead! dead! impossible! when did she die?"

"Ah, that is it, who can say when? Perhaps you, for Anna says you killed her, I know you drove us from Peterhoff just as our court-mourning too was made for the Princess of Sommerhausen. Three days ago we came; three days my mother had been locked up in her boudoir; this morning Anna was worse; we knocked and no one answered; we shouted—no reply—at length we burst the door, and there was my poor mother dead. Anna started from her sick bed, she is with her now, which is folly, for my mother died of a fever, and what care the dead for watching—and in her wild and inconsiderate way, she has sent out all our people—all but Masha, who never knows how to dress one—she has hooked these hooks in the wrong eyes, I feel she has."

Leaving her by a simultaneous impulse, Nadeshta and Horace intuitively made their way to the boudoir. The brick and plaster were scattered about, and the iron-plated door, with its distorted bars, lay unhinged

and battered, just as it had been broken through by the axes of the serving men, who, fearful of the sight of death, had all eagerly obeyed the mandate of their young mistress, and had spread right and left across the country for useless succour.

Let us enter the mysterious boudoir, which is an oratory, with cold, bare walls and a brick floor, divested of all furniture: a few of the old Sclavonic books of prayer are on the ground.

In the centre of the apartment sits Anna Obrasoff in her night dress, her long hair flowing loose about her shoulders, along with her dead mother, whose head reclines upon her knees, and whose lips of lurid blue, she presses with her lips which burn with fever.

There is still an expression of intense suffering about the features of the corpse, not merely of the body's pain, which death obliterates when he triumphs over pain and life; but of that mental agony which stamps even the cold clay so long and plainly. Their ever changing character, wont to vary like the chameleon's colours or the rainbow's tints, are fixed for ever now in those sad dolorous lines to which they were distorted when she died.

The feet are bare, for thus she prayed and fasted in this place of penitence; the bust uncovered, because a cloth of rude and prickly horse-hair, the only covering of her body naked to the waist, has fallen from her shoulders.

By the stripes,—some raw, some livid—which scar their deadly whiteness, by the scarce healed flint marks on her tender feet—even without the black hood which lay beside her—the reader might have recognized the pale sister who watched by the bed-side of Blanche.

The taper fingers of her icy hand were tightly closed upon a rope—a rope knotted in the middle—the last fearful relic of the primary cause of this long penance—the rope that strangled her young lover, the fifth of the conspirators xecuted: a terrible memento which recalled even the minutest horrors of his death scene, because that very knot recorded an appalling incident, dissevered by his living weight, when he fell from his high gibbet through the scaffold, and reunited when they tied him up again with crushed and mangled limbs.

After this calamity, Madame Obrasoff had been led to join the congregation at whose meeting the reader has assisted, and her remorse, her love, and her maternal tenderness, had all been mingled and consulted, as the vague and mystic tenets of the nascent sect admitted, when she began her long and agonizing work of expiation, a work of expiation which its object rendered sublime, since undertaken in the hope that it was his soul and not hers which would benefit by her suffering.

On the floor of this cold cell, so bare that, as the midday light fell upon it, any object was readily discernible, a lock of hair was lying, just as the deceased, remembering that she had worn it next her bosom, had thrown it from her with disgust. This lock of hair had served to furnish merriment to the whole capital, and to Horace no less than to all the rest, though not now as it accusingly met his eye, for he felt that, like the last drop which makes the cup overflow, this lock had been the crowning feather, which, piled upon the overloaded heart—so silent now—had broken it.

CHAPTER X.

Horace, before the Prince's departure for Moscow, had seen cause to conceal from him the suspicion, or rather the conviction, which he entertained of having been deliberately left by him to perish in the marsh. Now, on Isaakoff's return, the motives which had urged his guest to this dissimulation, operating not less powerfully, may account for the assumed composure of the Count as his host commented in a strain of heartless pleasantry on the death of Madame Obrasoff.

Although it was true that the dull motionless sky, before a storm, or the lurid clouds tinged with light by the still unobscured sunset, and furiously driven by the gust which speeds them on so rapidly, are not each in their way less thunder-charged, or less indicative of the tempest, than the impassible gravity of Horace, or the malignant levity of the Prince, still they sat again in hollow companionship, notwithstanding all the hatred that lurked alike beneath the solemn calmness of the Count and the gaiety of Isaakoff.

"How very good," said the Prince, "the idea of my having killed her with a jest! What a compliment to one's powers of pointing a story! I only

know of one similar triumph, and that I submit does not equal it. It does not equal it because consisting only in the annihilation of an individual *to whom* a mischievous story was told, not *of whom* it was related. People don't so easily die of anything you can say of them—a fact to be philosophically accounted for, by reason that people are so little accustomed to hear a very good story that every one is unprepared for it; whereas to be slandered is a thing to which habit hardens one. And then I had forgotten to say that the other victim had his mouth full when the fatal fit of laughter overtook him."

"Let us change the theme, I pray you," said Horace.

"No, by the body of Bacchus, not. Just when in these dull days one has found a diverting theme!—To think how a fool may be witty, and a liar tell the truth in spite of his teeth! Only fancy that the last time I saw Jakof, he had borrowed a laudatory epithet applied by his English groom ten minutes before in my presence to the cherry-coloured ribbon he had twisted round the front piece of a chesnut horse's bridle, and, as our millionnaire complacently surveyed his factitious curls in the glass, he said they were *killing*."

"Hark, Isaakoff," said the Count, scarcely able to conceal his disgust, "the scene—the unhappy event the consequences of which I have witnessed has produced on me a deep and painful impression. To speak seriously, I do not relish any allusion to it at this moment, particularly from you to me, who are neither perhaps entirely guiltless of what has happened."

"Reassure your tender conscience," replied the

Prince, "you and I are as guiltless as if a mad woman had hanged herself with one of our neck-cloths. The inimitable Madame Obrasoff's career was in the most natural order of progression in the world; not the French order of progression, which is as you know, the *femme galante* from her spring upwards, the *femme savante* and the *bel esprit* on the wane of her summer, and lastly the *dévote* to the end—but as it is more commonly practised by our Russian dames, who omit the intermediate stage, and so of course blend their gallantry and devotion at the period of transition.

"But what is most amusing in the matter is, that she should have puzzled us all by stepping on one side out of the regular march of female mind into the labyrinth of insanity, and that we should, like a parcel of fools, have endeavoured to unravel the clue of her fanciful aberrations by unwinding the thread of reason."

"There is an insanity of the heart more hideous than any of the mind," said Horace, and then he checked himself in what he was about to say, and rather ejaculated to himself than addressed to the Prince, the exclamation of "Poor Anna Obrasoff!"

"Madness, my dear fellow," replied Isaakoff, "is hereditary, nay more, it is in some measure catching. You seem disposed to classify; well, there is insanity of the brain, such as the Lady Obrasoff's; there is insanity of the heart, as you call it, when a young girl resolutely falls in love with something coated, as in the case of Miss Anna, that is, if there be no other of a family nature; there is insanity of the digestive organs, from which, alas, I am suffering now; and then, lastly, there is the impression which men

insanity makes on weak nerves and ardent temperaments. If I had not an insurmountable dread of being personal, I should have ventured to observe that your spirits are depressed, your cheek pale, your eye wild and bloodshot; I should have ventured to recommend gentle cathartics, bleeding, the head kept cool—"

"Yes! the head kept cool—it shall be," muttered Horace to himself; and he filled his glass to the brim, which the reader may perhaps think a strange way of keeping down the effervescence of inward passion—but then it was with water. The Prince also, who had his own point to carry, saw that he had pressed his temper to the extreme verge of endurance—so he said:

"After all, my friend, you know me—I believe in nothing—nothing excepting in the unfitness of water as a beverage."

"I prefer it."

"Then, by the majestic Neptune, by the gods of the limpid rivers, the nymphs of the clear spring, you shall have it bright and cold! Ho! there, rascals, bring us fresh iced water—this is tepid—and now, without any disrespect to the pure element which your preference renders estimable, I may be permitted to observe, that it is not a liquid stimulating to the spirits; so I will give you the last witticisms of Narishkin, and the abortive puns of his heavy imitators, from the Grand Duke Michael downwards."

"Isaakoff," replied Horace gravely, "I have a serious proposition to make to you."

"What! directly after dinner—run the risk of destroying your friend through indigestion?—Nay,

proceed, for by a merciful dispensation of Providence I take nothing seriously."

"Listen then!—you are the possessor of innumerable slaves."

"I wish I had more."

"Now, I have learned enough of your usages to know that you only regard them in the same light as in the West our proprietors do their butts of wine, or their growing timber, their sheep or oxen."

"Pardon the interruption," replied the Prince, "but there is this notable difference, that our serfs do not improve in value by age, like the juice of the grape or an increasing oak; and they are quite useless when dead; they do not leave even fleece, like a sheep, or a hide like an ox—but, for all that, as you observe, we regard them as a sort of humble property, and there is this advantage, that we can pawn them, which you cannot do by your beef and mutton. Pray proceed."

"In a word," said Horace, "will you sell me some of your slaves?"

"Sell them?—I will make you a present of a hundred and fifty, if you will only allow me to select them, and will enter in an agreement to take them off my hands altogether. I had proposed to hire them to a Moscow manufacturer for their keep and the engagement to bury them; but I will give you the preference."

"I am speaking in sober earnest, and, you may imagine, far from desirous of becoming a slave proprietor; but I am willing to purchase of you, even at a price exorbitantly beyond their market value, three of your people."

"My dear fellow," said the Prince, "are you aware that no foreigner can purchase slaves, unless he holds

at least the rank of an ensign in the imperial service? And then, unless he be naturalised, he can only retain possession of them during the period that he remains in Russia."

"I am aware that the law stands thus," replied Horace; "but I am also aware that it is constantly evaded by effecting the purchase in the name of some qualified party. And then," he added, "in the present case, even that subterfuge need not be resorted to, as I wish to purchase, not a right to their ownership, only their absolute freedom."

"I wish," said the Prince, "whilst you are so generously disposed, that you could make me such a present: you are versed in Russian law. Now, if I were willing to part with one of the coveted trio, would not a certain damsel be chosen, whom I once offered to exchange for a grey horse?"

"I mean Nadeshta," said Horace.

"What! still harping on my daughter?—A tall swan-like figure, a voice that the opera house would pay for—a grace which the ballet-master would value—a Spanish foot—an Andalusian port—a dash of the devil to give a raciness and flavour to the whole, like the grateful aroma of bright old claret. Look you, my friend, if ever a slanderous world should say that you lack discretion in your demands, turn you round and retort upon it, that at least you have excellent taste."

"I ask no gift—I offer you value for value; I will not bargain in this traffic for an immortal soul."

"If it is only respecting the soul that you are solicitous, I can assure you, not perhaps that the hundred and fifty serfs I offered you have souls—for that I would not venture to affirm—but that they have as much as Nadeshta has."

"You do not answer me."

"I can only answer you by a question. If I were to come to you, Count de Montressan, and to say, 'Will you oblige me by selling two or three of those hereditary acres which lie under your window; that portrait of your grandfather; that old bed in which your father and several generations of your ancestors died; the sword that hangs upon the wall, and two or three other little heirlooms—I will give you more than a broker would offer for them:'—what would you say to me?"

For a moment Horace was posed for an answer; then he replied:

"What the difference of custom might render strange in one country is not so in another. In one part of the world I shew disrespect by remaining covered: in another by baring my head. Have not I seen all your friends willing to sell and barter everything from the houses and palaces they inhabit, down to their pipes, sabres, pistols, watches, and fur garments?"

"Well then hear me; if I were dealing with one of my own countrymen, it might be according to their pedling habits; but I adopt the principle of your own Napoleon code, of treating foreigners as their laws treat you. If you had received me in your own château, your good breeding would not have allowed you to make a remark if I had ruined the horses you lent me, or wounded your favourite dogs, through awkwardness or carelessness: but, if I remember rightly, I think I have seen you, under similar circumstances, very starchly refuse compensation, saying that you did not sell:—so it is here—whilst you are my guest, my hospitality is not niggardly. Amuse yourself as you please with my slaves or my horses—but *I do not sell.*"

Horace was silenced for a moment by this refusal; but then, remembering not only that the vital importance of the occasion sanctioned any violation of the conventionalities of courtesy, but that his host had really placed himself beyond its pale, he resolved—notwithstanding the dignified decision of the Prince's answer—to press the question further.

"If I urge the matter," he said, "it is because I think that we do not rightly understand each other. I can readily comprehend that whether or not it be the custom of his country, a man of birth or fortune does not risk imbuing himself with the degrading spirit of barter, by condescending to the piece-meal sale of all he may possess, as some of your countrymen do; but after all it is a matter of taste, not of principle,—and a man sells an estate, or a princely gem, or a property of magnitude, without exposing himself to the humiliation—or without falling within the category of gentleman-pedlar. A caprice of the moment—a whim—if you like to call it so, has inspired me with a deep interest in three of your slaves, and has given them a value in my eyes which they cannot possess in yours, however high you may prize them. I was about to offer you the price of a whole hamlet for them!"

"I am not surprised," sneered the Prince, "you can afford it. Money, say the political economists, is measured by labour, and labour by money:—one cast or two of the dice, and you can pay me out of my own heritage."

"Listen, Isaakoff," said Horace: "I am a wealthy man in my own country, a poor one in your's. I have never been a thorough gambler—at least I have never felt the slightest temptation to risk more than the

superfluous accumulations of my patrimonial revenue. I confess that my first losses beyond that point would have driven me from the green baize for ever. I had never any wish to win from you more than what I should myself have hazarded: you forced my fortune on me. In fact, to be frank with you, the enormity of its extent has been a painful restraint which has kept me near you, in the same hope which I take it has animated yourself—that your luck would change and equalize our fortune."

"A chivalrous generosity," said the Prince: "it may yet be equalized."

"Not readily," said Horace, "for I play no more."

"What!—refuse to go on!" exclaimed the Prince, with visible agitation, "when you hold my acknowledgments for more than a million of silver roubles!"

"At least my banker holds them," answered Horace.

"Well," said the Prince, "every eunuch who keeps a money-changer's stall; every lavoshnik (shopkeeper) in Moscow, or St. Petersburg, will tell you that my property is worth the double. You will find me quite solvable, Monsieur le Comte, if you win as much more."

"I neither doubt you, nor intend to try," said Horace, coldly and resolutely. "If you will place yourself for one moment in my position, you will see that no further motive can induce me to play. Already my winnings, disproportioned to the risk, have accumulated through my anxiety delicately to return them. Thank God, I enjoy a sufficient hereditary competence to place me beyond the temptation of increasing my wealth by the ruin of another:—to say nothing of the stigma, which ill-nature would attach

to such exorbitant good fortune. Under these circumstances, Prince Isaakoff, sell me your slave, Nadeshta, her brother, and his wife, and I return you all your acknowledgments."

"You are very considerate," said the Prince, after a moment's reflection; "but I decline your offer."

Horace bit his lip, and turned from red to a deadly white; he had thought his offer too magnanimous to be refused. His next thought was to fix on his host a mortal quarrel; but then whether he fell, or the Prince was slain, the future of Nadeshta remained full of painful incertitude.

"You may readily conceive, my valued friend," continued Prince Ivan, "that there are gratifications which a man does not choose to forego for any sum, whilst still the possessor of a million silver roubles:—mine happens, unluckily, to be connected with the ownership of those identical three slaves, whose liberty you covet. If I were penniless, then I might reflect upon your offer. Now I do not see how I could be reduced to that condition, unless I were to play you double or quits for the million you have won; and even that, as the English say, 'a sporting thing to do,' I offer to oblige you."

"After all," said Horace, starting up, with a strange inspiration of confidence in his fortune, "why not?"

"Why not!" said the Prince, "so that you can only master your scruples."

"What, stake your whole fortune on a single cast?"

"On a single cast."

"What, now!"

"This moment."

"After all, it is horrible," said Horace, "the thought of two men—"

"Face to face, like starving wolves, you would say, and thirsting for each other's warm blood—for this gold is the blood that vivifies the veins of the social, as the red stream is the blood of the physical man."

The thought flashed across the Count, that, since the Prince resolutely refused to sell, he could be in no worse position if he lost. He reflected that his end must be attained by good fortune, which he intended using with moderation; and of which, by a strange infatuation, he never doubted.

"Do you speak seriously?" said Horace.

"As a priest at a burial," replied the Prince. "Shall it be cards, or dice?"

"Dice," said Horace.

"Then there, behind you, you will find those that we played with last—"

Horace drew from the interior of a backgammon-board of veneered ebony, with squares of inlaid silver, a set of dice.

"Once, twice, thrice," said the Prince, turning them out upon the table. "You see that they are true. Now then for the conditions:—double or quits upon the highest throw. We throw for precedence—a size—an ace. It is you to begin, Count Horace."

Horace rattled the dice loudly, though with some trepidation: he felt that, perhaps for the first time since dice had been invented, on that throw depended the relief of the oppressed—the freedom of the fatherless—the happiness or misery of four individuals!

"Six—six—five!" he exclaimed at length, with a shout of exultation.

The highest number on any of the faces of the cube is a six: three sixes were, therefore, the highest he could have thrown, and there remained only one possible combination by which Isaakoff could beat him.

"Hark!" said the Count, "you have not thrown yet. Let us compromise this business. I renew my offer. Give me up those three slaves and I draw the game and restore my preceding winnings."

"Not," said the Prince, quietly but determinedly, "not if you cast all you possess into the balance. Look!" he continued, raising the crystal goblet to his lips; "look! my hand is not as tremulous as yours," and then, stretching back wide his arm, in his attempt to replace it still half filled with wine upon the table, it fell and smashed upon the floor.

Horace's attention was for an instant diverted, and in that instant the Prince changed the dice.

"Reflect!" said Horace, "there are but two throws can prevent your losing. There is but one of the two—the three sixes—can possibly give you the victory."

"There *are* three sixes!" said Isaakoff, with confident exultation even before he removed the box, when, lo! three little abortive aces stared him in the face! At this sight, Ivan Ivanovitch sank back in his chair, and turned so pale and faint, that Horace threw over him a glass of water. The Prince Isaakoff was a beggar!

By one of those strange mischances which sometimes mar the most cunningly combined plans, the ruined magnate, after perfecting himself by a fortnight's instruction and practice, had mistaken one set of loaded dice for another!

CHAPTER XI.

"WELL!" said Horace; "by heavens, your nerve was wonderful! I thought it must give way."

"My nerve!" replied the Prince, who had recovered his external composure, though feeling all the uneasiness natural even to the boldest man whose safety no longer depends upon his own skill or courage, but upon the problematic faults of an enemy. "My nerve! What is the matter with my nerve? I have just been suffering from a provoking twinge in the abdominal region, that's all. That infernal cook is getting heavy in his dishes. As for our game, you have won and I have lost, as must have happened to one of us. I can afford to play no farther. Now look," continued Isaakoff, tearing off a piece from the envelope of a letter. "As to nerve, did you ever see me write a clearer hand than I am doing now in making out this acknowledgment, of which I cannot specify the value, because ignorant of the exact amount of your previous winnings, therefore I only subscribe myself your debtor for double whatever sum they reach to."

"All this is unnecessary," said Horace. "I do not want your gold—the representative of your human property. You let the proper documents be made out for the liberation of those three individuals, whom

the infamous customs of a barbaric society has placed in your power, and I give you back my winnings; so we shall part quits, if not friends. Prince Ivan Ivanovitch, perhaps you will give me your answer to-morrow? Perhaps you will summon your people that I may retire?"

The object of Horace, in leaving the Prince the interval of a night for reflection, was his dread lest the excitement of the moment might betray him into a refusal, which obstinacy might afterwards lead him to maintain.

"As to your offer," replied Isaakoff, trying a few careless throws with the dice, "I beg leave unequivocally to refuse it, as I will do again to-morrow if the repetition will amuse you. And then, as to calling the servants, there is a hand-bell close to you, unless you prefer to clap your hands, as you have always seen me do myself. Do not think me rude; oh, no! fortune may vanish with the cast of a die—as mine has done—but I have never staked either my temper or good-breeding, and so have not lost either. This house, the lands and villages surrounding it, the slaves who serve us are yours now. Count Horace, it is for you to call them."

"This is childishness!" said Horace; "this is an impossible termination to such a scene!"

"Unlucky, not impossible; whatever *is*, is more than possible. I was about to add that, as this whole estate is to be sold to liquidate a portion of your claim, I consider it from this hour as yours, excepting from it only my slaves, Mattheus and Nadeshta."

"Confound your slaves! A malediction light on all your property! It is Nadeshta, and her brother, and her brother's wife that I must have—

if not, there is ruin staring you in the face. I will use my good fortune—by the God that made us! I will use it to push you to beggary or to degradation! It is not avarice which might feel shame or pity—but it is pity itself; and that revenge, which all men must applaud, will push me to it."

"So be it!" said the Prince. "Ruined I am, for one so wealthy, not beggared. Some thousands will remain from the wreck, and I shall still enjoy as great a gratification as fortune could give me—an intensity of hate towards those three slaves, whom I shall connect with my ruin. Consider for a man—whose appetite is as uncertain as the sunshine—who would have given a limb for one soul-stirring sensation which might rouse the stagnating blood—consider the delight of hating soundly, and of daily sating one's revenge by scientifically husbanding its dainty pleasures!"

"Is it possible that there can breathe such a fiend in human shape," said Horace, who was losing head before the coolness of his adversary; "are you then quite heartless?"

"Quite, in a sentimental point of view," replied Isaakoff, throwing down the dice-box, "and anatomically speaking, they say, almost without a liver. If, indeed, you were again disposed to try your fortune—"

"Truly," said Horace, "to play with a ruined man!"

"To play," answered the Prince, "with the master of Nadeshta. Though I will not sell, I might be induced to stake the three slaves against the fortune I have lost."

"No," said Horace, after a few moments' consideration, "brave it as you will, you cannot persuade me

that the advantage I hold over you is not worth more than the even chance of winning or losing everything."

The Prince clapped his hands: a domestic obeyed his summons.

"Send hither the steward"

"What are the commands of my high-born master?" said Johann, following it by an exclamation of "Herr Jesu!" as he trod on the broken glass, and cut through the leather of his boot.

"Johann, you will send a messenger with a vehicle to the Capitan Ispravnik: he is to send two men to punish a slave upon the spot."

"My Lord," said Johann, "we can inflict any punishment here; we are beyond the distance which requires that we should send for the police."

"Only as a man may die under the lash, which will probably happen at last, one is thus free from all responsibility."

"Your reasoning is full of wisdom—you shall be obeyed," said Johann, obsequiously.

"Stop," said the Prince, "to-morrow, at daybreak, you will assemble the village, and cause the slave, Mattvei, to be punished in the presence of his sister; and then you will take her yourself to Moscow to Madame A's, the milliner; you will tell her that I send her an apprentice, to whose services she is welcome for the next three months, and that, as soon as he can move, she shall have the brother for a porter. Now, begone!"

"I obey," replied the steward, and he hobbled out with numberless bows.

"What," said Horace, "if I were to fix on you a deadly insult?"

"If irreparable," replied the Prince, "we should fight."

"What!" said Horace, "if I were to kill you like a dog?"

"Then," retorted Isaakoff, with an inward chuckle "my acknowledgments would be waste paper."

"Good God!" said Horace, "what is to be done?"

Isaakoff pointed to the dice-dox.

"Risk everything on a cast when one holds such cards in hand!" was the thought of Horace, which the Prince divined, for he said,

"If my suggestion suits you, we might meet half way—you shall stake one million against the three slaves."

"And, if I lose, be in the same position as before."

"No; if you lose, I will stake Nadeshta alone against the other million."

At this moment the voice of Johann was heard calling lustily in the yard, as he proceeded to despatch a messenger in obedience to the orders of the Prince.

"Come," said Horace, seizing the dice-box with desperate resolution, and with the mental reservation of having the heart's blood of his adversary if he lost.

"Come," said the Prince, with fiend-like satisfaction, for whilst he had been apparently casting the dice upon the table for amusement, he had rectified the error which had led to his late disaster, and he now played with the certainty of fortune, "let us understand each other; the highest throw wins—you stake one half your winnings against my three slaves?"

"Nadeshta, and Mattvei, and Mattvei's wife," specified Horace, with anxious caution.

"Shall we throw for lead, or will you play first?"

"What matters," said Horace.

"Play, then."

"Here goes," said Horace, and his eyes lit up with a gleam of satisfaction, when he saw two sixes and a three, and then scarcely doubting of victory, two thoughts contradictory in their influence flashed almost simultaneously across his mind. In another instant he thought to see the Prince, stripped, not only of his fortune, but baffled in his cruelty, and he now determined to divert the generosity he had originally intended from his unworthy adversary, to scatter it with princely profusion amongst those over whom he recently tyrannised, and then at the same moment the idea first struck him—what if Isaakoff should deny his debt of honour? Horace could ruin him then—his enemies would make a handle against a rich man and a magnate of what is daily passed over in others—the Emperor himself would seize the pretext—but then Nadeshta!

At this instant Isaakoff threw — Isaakoff conquered.

"You have won," said Horace, filling a glass to the brim with wine, and tossing it hurriedly off, "You have won; well, now we play the other million against Nadeshta!"

"If you prefer water," said the Prince, "I will call for some fresh iced. The turn of one of those little cubes of ivory, the fraction of an inch, has made me master again of all surrounding us, and entails therewith the necessity of attending to all the amphytrionic courtesies."

"Throw," said Horace, sternly.

"Oh," replied Isaakoff, filling himself a glass, the contents of which he raised to his lips and sipped, "play on, it is your right, you are the loser."

"Here, then!" said Horace, "here!" and with a violence intended to conceal his trepidation, he thundered down the dice upon the board.

In the result of this action there was nothing to relieve his anxiety, for Isaakoff said directly,

"Three quatres, that is only twelve; now, Monsieur de Montressan, you lose!" and seizing the dice in his turn, the Prince looked intently at Horace, and shook them long and tantalizingly.

There was something in his glance so full at once of anticipatory triumph, and of cold and passionless malice, as, enjoying his adversary's suspense, he paused instead of throwing, and then again began to shake the bits of ivory, big with fate, that a cold perspiration broke out on the brow of Horace. To his unstrung nerves and over-excited mind, the gaze of the Prince recalled the eye of the rattlesnake when meditating where to inflict its venom; and the clatter of the dice, as he shook them to and fro, of the fatal rattle, which warns all living things that the death sting is about to make an inlet for its poison—the mortal poison, which festers incurably in the victim's flesh.

This presentiment of evil proved prophetic, as how could it otherwise, considering the fraud which his host was practising?

"Lost!" gasped Horace, "oh God! it is lost!"

"Lost," replied Isaakoff, "that is to say, that the Count de Montressan and his humble servant are quits, just as when he did me the honour to take up his abode beneath my roof. The case is a hard one."

At this moment a vehicle rattled out of the yard; Horace knew that it was the messenger despatched to the Ispravnik; he rose without any determined pur-

pose, but the blood throbbing to his temples, and maddened to an irresistible vindictiveness.

"You will remember," said the Prince, "that you hold my distinct acknowledgments for some two millions of silver roubles. Do you forget the quittance?"

"Here," said the Count, tearing the paper he had received into pieces, and scattering it on the floor.

"That is half; perhaps you will write a receipt in full for those you have so cautiously deposited with your bankers."

"Look you," said Horace, "when a man, your creditor, lies in his death-struggle, smothering in a marsh—"

"If ever," interrupted the Prince, "you can be so unfeeling, that must be the time to leave him there. Ho, there! clear away this litter. Your hand trembles, Count Horace; this is a poor specimen of calligraphy, though, after all, it makes us quits. Send us the coffee when I clap, and request, in my name, the company of Nadeshta with her guitar. I feel at home again, my valued friend, amongst my household gods. She must sing here to-night, if to-morrow at Moscow."

Horace, with his clinched fist, approached Isaakoff. "Fiend!" he said, in a hoarse and husky voice.

"I was an unlucky devil an hour ago, at least," said the Prince, and then seeing that there was danger in the Count's eye, and that he had driven him to the last extremity, he dexterously stopped him short in the very act of resorting, perhaps, to some personal violence, by saying: "Would you like another throw for this Briseis? If so, my intemperate Achilles, you will find me magnanimous as the king of men!"

Horace stopped short at this proposition, which flashed on him a ray of hope.

"And what can I stake?"

"You have a patrimonial fortune; stake that as I did mine."

"Impossible," said Horace, "the heritage of my fathers!"

"It is about a seventh of my own: modesty is my prevailing weakness, or I should say that I was generous to propose it."

"Impossible!"

"As you will; I offered you your revenge, one half your fortune against the three slaves, and if you lost, the other half against Nadeshta."

"Well," said Horace, "well, so be it then! It is a strange stake, one half of estates whose value is not even definite, against the freedom and the happiness of three immortal beings, made after God's own image, who will surely guide my fortune."

"It would be so easy for Providence, if you could only inspire it with a taste for gambling," sneered the Prince, "just to incline three bits of dotted bone two sixteenths of an inch."

"Go on," said Horace, "it is your throw."

"Now," said the Prince, "I defy the Archangel Michael himself to beat that, if sent to succour you with Miltonic weapons."

Three dark sixes stared Horace in the face, like rows of black grinning teeth. His only chance was of throwing the same, which would neutralize Isaakoff's fortune. He failed.

Horace said nothing; he tossed off a goblet full of wine, but there was that in his manner which induced the Prince to clap for his attendants.

"No not coffee!" and then he added in Russ so rapidly that Horace could not understand him, "be four of you at hand, the Count has drunk."

"Now," said the Prince, "it is you to throw."

Horace threw silently, he breathed: this time he had too thrown the triple sixes.

Fortune had done for him with fair dice what Isaakoff was sure of by dexterously changing them for a biassed or loaded set, whenever he took them up.

Isaakoff played, he threw three sixes, they were even.

"This is strange," said Horace, "nothing but triplets!" and then with desperate boldness he commenced again. "Four, four, and six!"

The Prince took up the dice, Horace felt that the ruin not only of his fortune, but of all his hopes hung so completely by a thread, he knew that it would be so utter and so hopeless that he only waited the result to fly at Isaakoff's throat like a dog, determined as he was to throw his life after his fortune or to take his enemy's.

At this moment,—whilst the wrongs of Nadeshta, of Mattvei and of Blanche, and the image of Madame Obrasof were flitting in his mind and pointing his gaze with an intensity of hatred on the Prince,—the Prince conscience-stricken and coupling his guest's fierce look with his last observation, imagined himself suspected. He grew confused, he missed the opportunity of changing dice. It is true that, in an instant regaining his self-possession, he meditated overturning the table and in the confusion recovering the chance he had lost; but then—besides the consideration that so doing might possibly give rise to the very suspicion which, a moment before, he had causelessly apprehended,—by one of those strange anomalies

which are quite unaccountable, though common to human nature, he was influenced by a momentary feeling of rude pity—at least in thus far that when he reflected that he was now only risking the possession of Nadeshta he felt inclined to give her the fair hazard of the game. He did so, he played with the same dice as Horace :—he lost.

"Nadeshta is mine! I have won—I have won!" shouted Horace impetuously as he rose from the table.

"She is yours," said the Prince, "from this hour."

"Then this hour," said Horace, "let the necessary steps be taken for her manumission!"

"It shall be so; but you have an acknowledgment to write for half your broad lands—this is a good bold hand; but we have been playing an exciting game, perhaps you would like to pit your prize against my winnings?"

Horace shook his head with lofty disdain. He heard the voice of Nadeshta in the anteroom, he rose and rushed to meet her.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS room was on the opposite side to the one occupied by the attendants.

Nadeshta and her brother, aware of the proposition Horace was about to make to their Lord, had been long awaiting here its issue in breathless anxiety. From the rattle of the dice, they had intuitively divined that their fate was being thus decided. At length the last exulting exclamation of Horace had burst upon their ears, as he shouted joyously, "Nadeshta is mine! I have won, I have won!"

Mattvei had sunk into a chair, and Nadeshta held his trembling hand in hers. It was the cry of delight responding to his own, which had attracted the attention of her lover.

"Nadeshta," said Horace, "dear Nadeshta, you are free!"

"Free!" repeated Nadeshta, "Oh God, how strange it sounds, free, free!"

"Free as the birds—the winds—the beams of light. This night, this very night you shall fly from the scene of your serfage, far away and for ever."

"Oh!" said Nadeshta, pressing his hand to her lips and falling on her knees, "Oh, bright and glorious being—my guardian angel—light of my soul

—my Horace! yes, let us fly for ever and at once, but not together, you are too good, too great, too pure, too generous; no shadow of a stain must rest upon you; your's must be the spotless image which a maiden may, in her thoughts enshrine, and treasure in her heart, to worship through her life and die in blessing. Think not of impossible promises—I see, I feel it at this hour, they are impossible."

"Nadeshta," said Horace, who had raised her up, "there is nothing impossible but to leave you. Look, Sir, this ring which I put on her finger was my mother's wedding ring. You are her brother—join our hands, and be the living witness as I call the eternal testimony of the departed, that now I claim the faith your sister plighted me as I, before God, redeem the word I pledged her, swearing to seal that bond by indissoluble links the moment we can find a priest. My love, my wife, my countess! oh yes, we will fly directly—for ever, and for ever together."

Mattvei trembled violently. He joined their hands; but he could find no speech: like the traveller in the fable where the wind and sun dispute their influence, he had wrapped himself in a mantle of impassibility against the tempests of fate; but the unexpected sunshine of good fortune, making him throw aside this stoicism, quite unmanned him.

"Oh, do I dream?" said Nadeshta, "am I—am I truly waking, my Horace? Shall we all, all fly this night?"

That fatal word *all* recalled to the mind of the Count what he had forgotten in the rapture of his first success, that Blanche and Mattvei were still in the Prince's power, and it shewed him at once the cruel error into which Nadeshta and her brother had fallen.

"All—oh no! you do not understand me, I have lost all my winnings, I have lost you all, I have forfeited half my patrimonial fortune. I have only won, with my last stake, Nadeshta's freedom."

Mattheus seemed stunned for an instant by this terrible disappointment; but then his composure, so slow to restore in his good fortune, at once returned with his unhappiness.

"All that it has been in my power to do, my brother," said the Count, "I have done. All that I can yet do, I will do—but it will be more in the capital than here. You would not have me leave this child?"

"No, no, no, no!" said Mattheus, "no, God forbid, that will be one weight taken from my heavy heart."

"Oh!" said Nadeshta, "I knew, I knew it was a dream, I knew it must be like those bubbles, rainbow-tinted, which burst in my infantine hands. Oh my poor brother, do not think I shall quit you. Go Count Horace, go, go bright meteor of my soul's dark night! go and bear with you the slave girl's heart, for she will not even choose to be free whilst Mattvei is a captive."

"This cannot be, Nadeshta! Take her, my glorious brother, take her with all the blessings of her only relative."

"You are mine!" said Horace, "you may no longer choose, you are no more my love alone, you are my wife, my countess!"

"Press me no more," said Nadeshta, "you should know me both—my brother, you, and you, my Horace. You should know how unalterable is my purpose, you should know that mine is not the weak will of a faltering woman, and being so—immutable

and fixed—it is cruel—it is cruel, Horace, my own Horace, thus to urge me."

"Hear me," said Horace, "you are fatherless; your brother in your father's stead commands; by staying you cannot alleviate his misery. I implore, entreat, command—in the name of that sacred token which has made you mine—"

"Look!" said Nadeshta, plucking off the ring, and casting it from her, "why bruise my heart farther? There is a monitor within it that I obey—why tyrannize over our very affections—what right has father or brother to command? I have no obedience, I have only affection: I have only the unchangeable will to suffer with him. I shall have only the unalterable constancy to love you to the last, my Horace, not the baseness to follow you. No! I must die here like the trampled wood flower on the humble ground on which it grew, breathing my benedictions on you to the last, as the crushed plant exhales its odour. I have my destiny, you yours. Go, Horace, and be happy—go! knowing there is one who in her loneliness will worship your very memory, and from a distance regard you as a dreamy child of earth regards a twinkling star, so far—so long outliving its frail frame."

At this moment a loud, shrill, prolonged laugh burst upon them, and the Prince's head was seen thrust in betwixt the opened door.

"Very good! very good! you have a pretty turn for acting, Nadeshta, genteel comedy, or the melodrame, another accomplishment worth all the other."

Horace bounded forward like a tiger. He pursued the Prince into the next room; the Prince hastily placed a table between them.

"Stop! stop! stop!" said he, "this is becoming

tragedy—and the comedy was so excellent—besides it is not over. Try your luck again, you shall stake Nadeshta against Mattvei and his wife.

Horace was tempted. Nadeshta's refusal to quit her brother—his knowledge of the indomitable firmness of her character—the reflection that the case was desperate—the rapid succession of startling changes which these magic bits of ivory produced—all led him to renew a trial of his fortune. He restrained his anger, and they sat down once more to play.

"Believe me," said the Prince, "it was a delightful scene, and admirably acted—Count Horace taking the trouble to persuade his slave that he would marry her, and she affecting to believe it."

"Prince Isaakoff," said Horace, "I was serious then, I am serious now."

"Now, by the body of Bacchus!" said the Prince, falling back in his chair, in an inextinguishable fit of laughter, "now by the body of Bacchus! you will soon be the only living creature so. The Count Horace de Montressan marry—marry my slave girl! Why we need never have gambled for her; I would have given her you and welcome, for the sport's sake."

"Play!" thundered Horace, "and then—"

"What then?"

"Throw, and I will tell you."

"I have thrown, I have won. What now?

"Now," said Horace, seizing him by the cravat, "oppressor! tyrant! scoundrel and assassin! thus I strike you, craven, on the face: thus I would strangle the life from your carrion body, if it were not that I shall yet let the black blood out of your heart—the victims of its corruption will guide my avenging arm!"

"Help! help! help!" screamed the Prince, who had grown from livid to black in the face.

In an instant, Horace was overpowered by the attendants who rushed in from the adjoining room. By the Prince's order they twisted round him the table-cover, pinioning his arms.

"He is very drunk," said the host, "lay him on the sofa. Send Dietrich, and get ready my carriage. I start immediately for Moscow."

"Count Horace, you are mad with vexation and passion. No wonder—half your hereditary acres have been wasted to gain an object in which you have failed. I cannot fight you before you have paid me or given me some security on which I can recover; for my hand is lucky with the pistol as with the dice-box. By sending to St. Petersburg for the attestation of your Consulate, you can procure a valid document—then I am your man. Meanwhile, business calls and pleasure beckons; I entrust to you this mansion, my stud, my cellar, my cook, and the *ladye Countess.* When your messenger returns, so will I, and then we will square accounts. Only, whilst you are dabbling with deeds and parchments—one word of parting advice—do not forget your will."

Whilst Horace was struggling in the covering in which he was encased with all the fury of an angry child, the Prince vanished with a graceful salutation as he crossed the threshold of the door.

CHAPTER XIII.

Horace was again struggling in his toils, after an interval of exhaustion, when Johann appeared before him.

"My Lord, who has just started for the city, has sent me to you with his most humble excuses for this little violence. Calm yourself, illustrious Sir! I will unbind you. You really, really must pardon us. It is provoking, Sir, to lose at play, and then, Sir, the wine is heady."

"Rascal!" said Horace, "rascal! thou liest like thy master. I have drunk nothing but water."

"Then it is play that has made you outrageous, high born Sir. There is only one game which never ruffles the temper, a game of my own invention, at which both parties win. I shall be happy to teach it you, noble Sir."

"Unbind me," roared the Count, "only unbind me and I will twist thy infernal neck!"

"Nay, now truly," said Johann, stopping short with a look of alarm at this ungracious promise, in the very act of freeing the captive from his bonds, "it would be unphilosophical in the extreme to do so. Pardon me, my Lord, but, if you were to twist your humble servant's neck, you would put it quite out

of his power to serve you further. You would put it out of his power to obey his honoured master, who has strictly commanded him to attend to all your wants and wishes till his return. That is to say, as soon as the effect of the wine—I mean of the water—has passed away."

"Fool," said Horace, "I am perfectly calm. Unbind me, I will not do thee any mischief."

"I hope not," said Johann, still parleying, "I hope not, my high-born Lord. I have no wish, but according to the instructions of my honoured master to obey you in every thing. The slaves, the stud, the kitchen, the cellar—only," added the steward in prudential parenthesis, "only that I have mislaid the key of it this evening—are all at your disposal. So is Johann Sauer, your humble servant, with whatever philosophical knowledge and mechanical talent he may happen to possess."

"Come, unbind me, Master Sauer," said Horace, as calmly as he could.

"I am doing so—I am doing so. And then my Lord further said, that his noble guest might wish to send some one to St. Petersburg, for whom I am to procure an immediate passport—if it be so desired. These knots are very tight."

"Cut them, worthy Johann," said the Count; and Johann, now quite re-assured as to his prisoner's sanity, released him in a moment.

"Now, rascal!" said Horace, seizing him; "thy master is gone. Where is Nadeshta? where Mattheus?"

"Oh, mercy!" exclaimed Johann, "they are both in the next room." This was true; the Count had himself turned the key upon them.

"Oh! he has not taken them!" said Horace, greatly relieved, and releasing the steward.

"He has not taken them," repeated the steward, gaining the door and keeping his hand cautiously on the handle. "My Lord has left them both at your disposal."

Horace reflected for a few moments, and divined that the orders which the Prince had given had been dictated by an injurious suspicion, since they evidently originated in a wish to retain him beneath his roof until he had given some tangible security for the sum he had lost to him. Now, although Horace was not aware of the good reasons which his host had for this conduct, he considered that he could profit, without scruple, by this pseudo-hospitality.

In truth, the Prince had some years ago been detected in a very infamous gambling transaction, which had been widely bruited, more on account of its extent than of its nature. Now this, according to the custom of Russian society, instead of excluding him from its pale for ever, had only enveloped him in a temporary cloud. But although a few years' absence had cleared it away, Isaakoff was aware that its memory was not quite extinct, and would be so thoroughly awakened, if Horace published the amount of his losses, as to be sure to reach his ears, arouse his suspicions, and cause him perhaps to demur to the payment of his debt.

"My worthy Johann," said Horace, "pardon my vivacity. I will give you my instructions in an hour or two—meanwhile, perhaps you will send me coffee to the library. I shall spend the evening with Mattheus and his sister."

"Oh, Sir!" said the steward, "they have both been educated to serve as company to any gentleman

at a pinch. You would not find better, excepting perhaps myself, for forty versts round about."

Horace opened the door; there stood the brother and the sister in mute, calm, sorrowful resignation—but a resignation utterly differing in its expression—for the eye of Mattheus, half upturned to Heaven, gave his face a mild and martyr-like character, whereas the cold pale lip of Nadeshta seemed fixed as marble in fate-defying scorn.

Nevertheless, in this important crisis, where every event had a fearful significance, the entrance of Horace was a singular relief to them. They had heard the carriage drive away; they thought it was Horace departing, and, when he opened the door, they were prepared to encounter the Prince.

"Come!" said Horace, "come both of you. My brother! my Nadeshta!" and, opening the door of the room beyond, he led the way into it.

This was the library. Like many other Russian libraries, it was furnished with blocks of wood covered with leather backs, printed with the titles of various books in gold letters, and of course the key of the brass net-work doors that kept them in was perpetually mislaid. But this was only the case on three sides; the fourth contained real books, magnificently bound, though without attention to the completeness of the works, the subject, or the language in which they were written.

In the mean while, Johann had no sooner quitted the room in which he had been left by the Count, than his place was occupied on the scene of the late struggle by another individual, who stole in at one door as Johann vanished through another—being Hans, his son and heir; he was, in one sense, the

most appropriate personage who could have succeeded his father.

It must be premised that Hans, particularly since the rivalship of the Count had left him hopeless, Hans had grown contemplative towards the hours of sunset—and yet it was not the declining sun that he loved to contemplate.

He had lived to see his ideal materialized—the dreams of his young imagination rendered real—though not for him. He loved, in short, to feast his eyes, since he could not feast his palate, on the glorious fruits, the pine-apples, the conserves and the confectionary, which were laid in their tempting array amid flowers and coloured crystals for the Prince's dessert.

And then it must be remembered that this dessert both went in and came out, so that Hans had a double opportunity of delighting his eyes and licking his lips, to say nothing of the chances it offered of pilfering; and so it happened that Hans was lingering near the spot when the sounds of the storm burst upon his delighted ears. With instinctive sagacity he foresaw that it must turn up something, and he was not deceived. When the Prince took his abrupt departure; when Horace was unbound, the serving-men, little anxious to remain in his vicinity, retired, and then Horace himself, and, lastly Johann left at once the scene of action, and all the treasures which Hans coveted unprotected.

Hans rushed to the table: he filled his pockets with trepidation; and then, returning once more when near the door, he bethought him that his cap was empty. He crammed into it a pot of guava jelly topsy-turvy, a pine-apple, some sweetmeats, and

he was hurrying from the door when his foot struck against something. It was, as he thought, a sugar-plum—he had seen many such before; he put it in his mouth, and bit hard at the crisp sugar, so hard that he bellowed, and spat out his broken tooth and the two fragments of the ivory die—for it was one of the dice that had dropped when Horace rose in his fit of desperation and overturned the table.

"Follow me!" said Horace, returning to the room; "follow me, both of you. I must not lose sight of you. How is it no one answers? We must beware of treachery. Stop!" he exclaimed; "stop!" as he caught the sounds of the retreating footsteps of the marauder, who at this summons fairly took to his heels, dropping his booty and putting on his cap, guava jelly and all.

We will pass over the touching scene which ensued when Hans appeared before his mother, roaring with the pain of his broken tooth, and the jelly mistaken for coagulated blood. We will pass over the terror and paternal anxiety of Johann, who doubted not that his master's furious guest had knocked out the brains of his son and heir, spoiling, and effectually spoiling in one moment a youth whom it had been for years his study not to spoil. We will leave Hans, in short, to return to the lost fragment of broken tooth, which has caused the *quid pro quo*. There lies beside it the die bitten in two; and just as Horace was saying: "Oh! if I could only establish the fact!" Mattheus stumbled upon it.

"What is this? One of the dice?"

"Good Heavens!" said Horace. "This is providential! May I never move from this spot if it be not loaded!"

And, on examination, so it proved—a hole had been bored through one of the dots, and a piece of lead inserted, one half of which was left exposed by the splitting of the ivory. Of course this partial counterpoise was calculated always to leave the lighter side uppermost—the lighter side was marked with the six, the highest number on the cube.

CHAPTER XIV.

"After all, this discovery can only avail me in the matter of least importance at this hour," said Horace. "I can publish his infamy—I can refuse to pay; but what is all that to the terrible position in which we stand? I cannot dream of leaving you; and if I were to take you with me—"

"That is impossible," replied Mattheus. "He holds your passport, and even you cannot proceed without his knowledge. Not only would you be stopped for the want of it, but you could not find horses one post along the road. No post-master durst furnish them without a *po darognè* or permit, only to be obtained passport in hand."

"And yet," said Horace, "we must profit by this providential breathing time,—something we must devise—time flies—we owe his forbearance only to his avarice; and yet gold will not tempt his avarice to humanity."

"No," said Nadeshta, "there is no hope: we are the doomed children of misery. But as for you, Count de Montressan—as for you, my Horace—there is but one course by which you will not add to it. You must leave us; you must go. Must he not Mattvei?"

"Oh yes, you must go," said Mattheus, grasping the Count's hand with a tenacity which belied his words, and then he added, pressing it with affection, as if a sudden thought had reconciled him to his departure: "Oh yes, you must go, because I know—I know, my noble brother, that you will see to her safety."

Horace was thoughtfully silent.

"Yes, you must leave us, dear Horace," said Nadeshta, "you must go, consoled by the thought that your love has gleamed like a ray of light into the night of my soul, remembering that death might have divided us, as it must at last; for death is a common occurrence—death is quite as inexorable as our fate—quite as implacable as our Lord—"

"What do you say?" exclaimed the Count, as if abruptly awaking from a reverie to the comprehension of her words. "What can you believe, either of you—do you believe, Nadeshta, that the thought of leaving you has crossed my brain for an instant?"

"No," said Nadeshta, "no. I knew you never entertained it; but oh! what it is to be a woman! If you had been disposed to leave us then, you might have gone or staid; and now because I know you would remain, your tarrying would break my very heart. You will not stay when you know this, Horace."

"No," said Horace, "I will not stay: we will not any of us stay. No human power would induce me, Nadeshta, to leave you at his mercy. If I were to remain, nothing could ensue but ruin and bloodshed; we must therefore take a desperate resolution and fly together."

"Oh it is impossible to fly."

"Impossible perhaps to fly by a post-road; but what if I were to make an appeal to the Emperor, what if we were meanwhile to seek concealment in the forests!"

"That would be worse than useless," said Mattheus, "the Emperor's heart is cold and unyielding. What are you to expect from the man who hardly ever alters the terrible sentences of his courts, martial or civil, but to add to their punishments!—the man deaf to the entreaties of wife, mother, and sister! He might, it is true, in his hatred to his great nobility, be glad of a pretext to strike the Prince; but do you think the slave would fare any the better? Is he not himself the greatest slave master in the empire? Is he not perpetually augmenting their number—already twenty millions—by the forfeit of mortgaged lands and confiscations? Is not the pretence of enfranchising his slaves a mere blind for credulous Europe, when he, by one dash of his pen,—without offending any interest—might restore one half the serfs in his Empire, those of his own private domains, to freedom? What sympathies can this man have with our condition if his ear were reached?"

"Well then," said Horace, "you and I are men; and as for this noble girl, her resolution is more manlike than either yours or mine. We cannot wait here like victims caught by the tide till it rises above our heads. We cannot perish without an effort: let us strike into the forests, shunning the haunts of men and shaping our course westwards, towards the setting sun. In time, from wood to wood, we may reach the Russian frontier."

"This cannot be," said Mattheus, mournfully.

"Not only the spirit of his race, but the very elements, the very surface of his mother earth conspire against the Russian slave, to give him hand-bound, foot-bound, to oppression. Nature and the climate are alike the accomplices of his tyrants, in every part of this vast prison-house."

"These boundless forests must yield a shelter, however comfortless," said Horace.

"These forests," continued Mattheus, "in the summer season, are a woody marsh. There is scarcely here and there a dry patch on which man can take repose; and then for miles and miles he must toil through a sort of morass, where at every step he sinks betwixt tree and tree up to his middle in the slough, and moss, and stagnant water, advancing a mile or two by toiling on the live-long day. With night comes either a chill, damp, penetrating cold, or else clouds of mosquitoes; in the day time, as he labours through the forest, the sun scorches his skin to blisters, and the flies and blue bottles buzz around him in myriads, settling upon him, till he regrets that, like the bear and the elk, he cannot hide all but his nose and mouth in the water; and then, after such a day, at night comes the reflection that two or three versts are got over of the thousands that lie before him; and then the winter—many winters—must overtake the fugitive. He must spend five long months like a bear in his den, because the snow betrays his footsteps; he must live on the frozen portions of the carcases of animals, which he has stolen like a beast of prey, before the first snow falls. There are few spirits and still fewer human frames can outlive such terrible privations. This is not to be thought of!"

"What a fearful situation!" said Horace. "There is then no hope."

"I have but one," said Mattheus, "that my profound submission may avert his wrath till she is saved."

"And then—" said Horace.

"Then come what may," replied Mattheus. "Once I should have longed to follow the example of Pugatchef, the Russian Spartacus, who not much more than fifty years since made the lustful Catherine tremble on her throne—Pugatchef, who, with his twenty thousand insurgent slaves, roused all the country as he came along to vengeance and revolt—Pugatchef the destroyer, who, as if in bitter irony, personated Catherine's murdered husband Pugatchef, of whom, to hide her fears from Europe, she affected to jest, calling him 'her Marquis though she sent against him the Generals Tcherbatof, Gallitzin, Tchernichef, Carr, Tolstoy, Freymann, Michelson, and Colon; though she could only vanquish him by treachery; and though our sovereigns to this day cause his memory to be still annually cursed in our churches with Mazeppa's.

"The old Starost, as a boy, followed in the human torrent; and like a hound once blooded, he took part in a subsequent revolt;—his experience looks forward to another here. The estate on which we live is surrounded by disaffected peasants, and our own will rise at the next failing harvest. Oh! all these are chances which I should have once looked forward to, though now the resignation to which I have bowed has softened my heart—like the iron whose hardness is lost in the fire through which it has passed—forcing it to recognise that truth to which so long I had obdurately closed it. Now, I shall but

look on. I feel the curse upon my race, like that upon the seed of Ham. I feel that to raise one's hand against oppression is to struggle with the Almighty. I feel it almost sin to hope for any of our people—"

"Mattveus, my poor Mattveus," said the Count, we must always hope."

"You and I have nothing in common," replied Mattheus: "listen, and I will tell you the awful secret of the predestined stock I come of. I have gathered it through long nights of study. I have confirmed it by wandering over the world of the ancients, and by decyphering the old inscriptions carved on the ruins of those mighty temples and cities, which arose when the young world was in its spring. When this truth first burst upon me, it was so terrible that I shut out the conviction. I sought to disbelieve the curse which works around me now."

"Dear Mattvei," said Nadeshta, "thy head wanders."

"Oh! no—Alas! its thoughts are strong and clear, and definite as you shall hear: do not interrupt me. You are a scholar, Count Horace, and can follow me—listen then:

"Sur and Assur, or the Assyrians and their Syrian brethren,—with Babylon and Nineveh for capitals—spread their colossal empire, as you know, ages ago, over Mesopotamia, Persia, Arabia, Canaan, and the whole of Asia Minor. But this race—the people of Nimrod, Bel, Semiramis, and Ninus,—first committed against God and man the crime of deifying man, and of subjecting the multitude to the passions of an individual; thus introducing into the world priestcraft, idolatry, and despotism, which have never since been rooted out.

"For this crime the Assur were swept from the

earth's surface. The Sur less guilty—driven far from the heritage of their fathers—have since multiplied and passed through three thousand years of protracted suffering—the elders of the Hebrews in the sad companionship of expiation.

"We, the Sclavonians—the Slavi, Servi, or Surbs, are the descendants of the Sur.

"All the old Syrian and Assyrian names are derived from words of our living languages, the Russ, or Polish, or Serbian, or Bohemian. We can read the inscriptions on the ruins of their Asiatic cities, by our modern Sclavonic dialects.

"The very name of Nebukadnezar, if written in Sclavonic, Nebuh-odno-tzar, records at once our ancestry and the crime for which we suffer. It means "*There is no God but the King.*"

"The four Jewish captives, Daniel, Hananiah, Michel, and Azariah, brought up for his service, received from the chief eunuch the Assyrian names of Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.* These names may all be put together from Sclavonic words, which would indicate that they were bred to fill the offices—still customary in the East—of bearers of the royal arms, and purse, curator of the tents, and purveyor of the table.

"This race, a conquering race, when it offended, has gone through so long a servitude, that its very name has become, in every language, an opprobrium and a term for slavery.

"In the Latin, Arabic, Persian, German, English, French, &c. the word serf, servitor, and slave, is deriv-

* Belteshazzar from Balta and tzar—weapon and king; Meshah from Meshok—purse; Sadrach from Shatior, tent; and Abednego from Obedniak—repast.

ed from the different names of the unhappy stock from which we are descended, from Assyrian, Syrian, Serb, or Servian, and from Slavi, Sclavonian, which is notoriously to this day the same people, or from that of the Venedæ, a Sclavonic offshoot.

"The Roman called his slave, *servus*, from *serb*: the slave too in the Latin comedies is named nearly always *Syrus*. The Persian calls him Venede from Venedæ; the Arab *El-Assyr* from *Assyria*. The English *slave;* the French *esclave*; the German *sclave*, are all derived from the word *Sclavonian.*

"Our race it was that fed so long the slave-markets of Rome, that perished in her arenas. The statue which images the dying gladiator, when

> his eyes
> Were with his heart; and that was far away:
> He reck'd not of the life he lost, nor prize;
> But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
> There were his young barbarians all at play;
> There was their Dacian Mother, he their sire
> Butchered to make a Roman holiday.

—the famous knife-grinder, whetting his knife to undergo the last humiliation of servitude, that of torturing a fellow slave at a master's bidding—are both without doubt Sclavonic in physiognomy.

"When the heel of the Roman ceased to trample us—when the grasp of fierce enemies was at his throat in his old age—the nations that flowed westward to assail him, to conquer and become your western ancestry, passed over our prostrate bodies.

"Every other people has its glories, we have none since the days of Nineveh and of Babylon. The Scyth, the Goth, the Teuton, the Hun, the Scandinavian, the Mogul, the Tartar—in short, all the countless tribes

that sprang hideous from the Ourals—blood-thirsty from the Tartar highlands—or fierce and beautiful and ruthless from the Caucasus, all had for their mission to tyrannise and inflict as the human stream swept by; it was our's to be resigned and suffer. Not to suffer and perish, but to endure and live; for, from the Black Sea to the Baltic—from the Bohemian hills to the Ouralian mountains—through centuries and centuries has our doomed people multiplied; and conquering hordes have ruled to uphold the curse, 'till time had softened by blending them with us, and then a fresh and fiercer migration has invaded us, like the fresh lash which the executioner attaches, when, after a few strokes, he feels the blood-soaked knout-tongue growing soft.

"When the great storm had ceased that rocked the world whilst the Roman empire was crumbling—when all the human avalanches that were scattered by the tempest had fallen—other nations found repose, not ours. Poland was overrun by a Sarmatian warrior tribe: the children of these Sarmatians—the Polish nobles—were free; but what were the people? Now that time has fused them into one, the spell works on again. Our ruler makes us Muscovites play in Warsaw the part of the knife-grinder when he whets his knife; just as ages back the children of the Sarmatian led the Sclavonians of Poland to desolate Sclavonian Muscovy.

"Where are our Servian, Bulgarian, and Bohemian brethren? As for ourselves in Muscovy, first the Norman sea-kings subdued us, then the Mogul and Tartar, then the spirit of the German. You see how it now bends the science and civilization of the world!—gathering its sacred fire to weld our fetters,

and to reproduce again a mighty and benumbing despotism:—the image of that old Assyrian empire which was our fathers' crime—for which we suffer.

"Who are those who govern us?—Who are our Lords?—There is ever some tinge of foreign blood about them:—but as for our pure race, the Almighty's curse still rests upon it! All this the slave knows not, and yet he is resigned. Travel and deep research through ancient lore have taught it me.... And I rebelled against the unwelcome light! I would not bear my burthen!—I would not take up my cross. I would be as other men, not born with the ban of the Eternal on them, and so his punishment has fallen upon me. I would not bend, and I am crushed!"

"Come, come!" said Nadeshta; "calm yourself, my brother: this is madness. Do not believe that God can punish the innocent for the guilty."

"Alas!" said Mattheus, "I *feel* around me now His malediction on my people!"

"Do not give way to this dark fatalism," said the Count, "or you will do nothing."

"What *can* we do, but pray that it be removed?" replied Mattheus; "and yet what is the prayer of one amongst so many millions? Still it has weighed upon them long enough—three thousand years!"

"In one thing I understand you now, my brother," said Nadeshta, "I too have but a single hope:—a hope, my Horace, which it depends on you to realize—the hope that, yielding to an inevitable fate, he who has infused so much that was sweet into the bitterness of servitude will mourn me, as I wish that he should mourn—avenge me, as I wish he would avenge me—devoting to my memory, his life—I mean preserving it

to devote it, together with his rank, his fortune, and his courage, in every clime, on every stage, incessantly to battle with that oppression of which Nadeshta was the victim."

"Impossible!" replied Horace; "I have not that enduring heroism of soul; and, if I had—I love: and all is said. If, when Isaakoff returns, he will not fight me, then, calling the benediction of Heaven upon my arm, I stretch him dead at my feet; and if I perish too, at least with him dies his personal animosity to you both!"

"Oh! never—never!" said Nadeshta. "I would sooner warn him. His hueless cheek reflects his craven heart; and he will so escape the doom, and you the penalty."

"Hark!" said Horace, "a thought strikes me: what if I were to use my prayers—my entreaties—my influence, with the Grand Duke's wife, to appeal to the gratitude she has expressed:—what if she could interest the Grand Duke Constantine?"

"The gratitude of a Princess!" said Mattheus.

"Oh! say not so of this one!" exclaimed Nadeshta; "Anna Obrasoff knows her: she is gentle, generous,—and all-powerful with her brutal Lord."

"There is a hope, perhaps!" said Mattheus.

"Oh, go—go—go!—fly to the Duchess, my Horace, and Heaven speed you!"

"No," replied Horace; "that would ruin all. I would not risk leaving you if it were needful, and it is needless. The Prince awaits the return of my messenger, my English groom. You know him, Mattheus, he is perfectly trustworthy. I will dispatch him instantly. Johann shall accompany him to the city to procure his pass: let us call him."

"Bob Bridle!—my friend!" said the Count, pressing his hand with warmth, "our common safety depends upon you."

"Sir," said Bob, "you cannot expect anything *uncommon* from a poor groom," and Bob, looking at his hands, thought internally, "I wasn't hired to wait at table, nor to shake hands with. If I had been, I'd have put on Berlin gloves."

"Our safety depends upon your mission:—I want you to start for St. Petersburg this night."

"This night!" said Bob, "and Lucifer just off a six hundred mile journey, and taken a bran mash!"

"I do not mean you to ride. You must drive as fast as six post-horses will carry you."

"Well, Sir, and Lucifer?—We might in England have shut him in a van; but you would not, surely, think of putting him into a sledge. As well think, Sir, of packing up a tiger in a clothes-basket."

"You must leave Lucifer till your return."

"Leave Lucifer!" repeated Bob, whose countenance fell, "leave Lucifer among all these Rooshian savidges?"

"I will attend to him myself."

"That won't be better," said Bob.

"Look you, Bob," and here the Count detailed the particulars which it was necessary that he should know; terminating his instructions by an appeal to his feelings in behalf of the daughter of his old master.

Bob's countenance remained unmoved; but not his determination, for he said:

"When shall I start?"

"At once."

An hour sufficed to get Johann ready to accom-

pany him to the city, and for Horace to prepare his letters and his instructions.

The kibitka was at the door.

"Above all, you will personally see the Duchess, if by any effort you can do so."

"She is the wife of that spicy Grand-Duke, is she, Sir?"

"She is, Bob."

"I hope she ain't as wiolent," said Bob; "it's awkward with a woman."

"Oh! no, she is an angel of gentleness."

"They all call theirselves so," remarked Bob.

"You will *see* her yourself, Bob."

"You will *see* the chill taken off that horse's water, Sir?"

"*I* will watch over your beautiful horse," said Nadeshta.

"Thank you, Miss," replied Bob.

"And now, God bless and prosper you!" said the Count. "If you succeed, my boy, I need not say—don't tarry on your homeward road: for remember you will bear with you the fate of four individuals."

"Besides that, no one can rub down Lucifer till I get back again," said Bob; and with a shout of "*padi! padi!*" the coachman started his horses, and Bob Bridle started on his career as a diplomatist.

CHAPTER XV.

"THAT is right," said the Lieutenant Alexius, surveying Bob Bridle from top to toe.

Bob Bridle was habited in a neat suit of black; but he looked ill at ease and disconcerted, because for the first time in his life he had donned a pair of trousers; it was a sacrifice he had made to the greatness of the occasion, when he was informed that there would be no possibility of introducing him into the presence of the Duchess whilst retaining any portion of his menial attire.

"Now step into the carriage, and seat yourself beside me; drive on, coachman. It is your master's request so urgently expressed," continued Alexius, "that you should personally see the Grand Duke's wife, that I have endeavoured to accede to his wishes, although just now it is a matter both difficult and dangerous. The Grand Duke's people watch narrowly all who come to ask favours of his Duchess; the moment is unfortunately chosen both to obtain speech of her, and I fear unpropitiously as regards her power to serve the Count.

"I must however warn you, that if you should be stopped and brought before Constantine Pablovitch, your only chance will be to assume in your character

of Englishman boldness and frankness in your speech. He is a rude giant, with shaggy brows, and tempestuous speech: his anger will make a bold man quail, and yet your safety will lie in concealing your agitation."

"I know the Grand Duke," replied Bob, "and though he is ginger-like, and as broad in the chest as a drayman, and as tall on his pins as a French pig, I don't much mind him. In partikilar as the odds is five to three I don't see him at all; but his lady, Sir, is she like him?"

"Oh the very reverse and antipodes."

"The reverse and contrairy is she, Sir; well that is all right and tight. I *do* prefer a little woman with a mild temper to have dealings with."

"Do you?" laughed Alexius, "well that is against the rule, little men are said generally to admire tall women, just as little women secure the preference of tall men."

"I don't know nothing of the preference of life-guards*men*," observed Bob dwelling rather scornfully on the last words so as to convert the noun into an epithet, "but I ask you, Sir, if that had been the taste of my father and grandfather whether I mightn't have been at this time being, as heavy as the Grand Duke hisself? It *was not* the taste of any of the Bridles or the Horseflys either that I knows on, though the former was given to books and the latter to dog's nose."

"Oh a family prediliction for exiguity of stature?"

"I call it, Sir, a family maxum,—little and good, short and sweet,—was the maxum as directed the choice of the women, whilst that of the men when they looked about for a wife was among many evils

to choose the littlest, which they did, Sir, by always *u*-niting theirselves to the smallest females as suited 'em."

"When I said that the Duchess was exactly the reverse of her husband, I only meant in temper: she is mildness, and kindness, and gentleness personified."

"That is satisfactory," replied Bob; "a woman—to say nothing of a lady—is awkward if she be the contrairy, and have turned her temper out to grass. As to the Grand Duke, though I've known him try on two of the wickedest tricks as a vicious individual could be guilty on in one morning, still I will manage to play my cards with him."

"Why, what have you ever seen the Grand Duke do?"

"Behave his self like a savidge, though in a way perhaps he was not so much to blame for, because it is the custom of the country. One thing he did though which oughtn't to be the custom in no country, and which would make my hair stand on end when I think of it if I hadn't had it cut so short this very morning. His imperious Eyeness Sir, turned restive and called on me to stop, which—as he was neither master, nor trainer, nor even head groom—I declines following his advice, in partickslar as I was mounted on the best horse in our stables—a slapping thorough bred grey, by Swap out of a Whalebone dam, as sound as a bell, and as beautiful as paint—a beast as could run neck and neck with a gale of wind, with bottom enough to tire it out if it worn't the equinox, and speed enough to beat it by a distance—a beast Sir, as knows me, better than I knows my bible; more credit to the horse for it and the less to me—a beast as understands what I say to him better than

half the Rooshians—a beast as will whinny an answer when I speak to him, fish a lump of sugar out of my boozim, and let me put his hind legs into my greatcoat pockets as long as I like to keep 'em there—a horse as will go over a wall like an Irish hunter, or take a double rail and ditch, at a long leap, like a Leicestershire clipper, and withal as mild as a lamb, excepting that he can't abide trumpets and drums, and soldiers and foreigners, and all awkward people as wants to meddle with him, and small blame to him for that, if any. This horse, Sir, which the Grand Duke never saw his like before—when the poor animal gets into the mud instead of helping him out which he would have done by such a pretty bit of horseflesh, if he had the feelings of a man or even of a Frenchman, or a life-guardsman—instead of jumping off to lend a hand—he begins slashing away at his haunches with a great carving knife of a sabre, just as I've seen the keeper of an ordinary, or the master of a cook-shop slice at a round of beef! There is the mark on Lucifer's quarters till this very hour, the length of your hand."

"Well and then?" said Alexius, who had heard the story though he had not recognized Bob as the hero of it, "then—he suddenly relented?"

"I don't know," replied Bob, "I saved him the trouble at any rate, and I should have crushed the soul out of his big body for the walley of a shoe nail, though I'm glad I didn't, for as he *is* the Emperor's brother, it would been disrespectful to do so."

"And then when you had un-horsed him in one of his capricious fits of generosity, his anger changed into admiration?"

"He did grow pleasant like. It's my opinion that

his Eyeness is like the missus of the 'Plough and Horses;' the lightenin' was deliberate and the thunder mild and quiet to that widow, 'till she got a husband as beat her, and then she turned as civil spoken and agreeable as a man-milliner."

"Well, but did he not insist on conferring some favour on you?"

"That," said Bob, "was the slyest and most underhanded part of the business, he wanted to make a *soldier* of me."

"He wanted you to enter the service under his especial protection. His aide-de-camps are soldiers. I am a *soldier* myself!"

"There are things," replied Bob with sententious gravity, "we can't help, or I should ride a stone or two lighter, but that don't make'm desirable. 'Thank you all the same', says I to the Duke, but says I to myself, I wonder where you've seen the green in my eye? I have travelled, Sir, and seen a good deal of foreign parts, and have heard more. In England we send people to Botany Bay or hang 'em in a respectable manner, in a suit of black,—like this one which I've got on,—with a night cap pulled comfortably over the eyes; but foreigners acts different. In Turkey I've heard say they spit them, and in Spain they roasts 'em, that is to say, when they catch 'em reading their bibles, which is wicked, cruel, and stupid, because if they think that what people does a purpose to perwent it is safe to send 'em to hell flames, what is the use of wasting their faggots? In France they cut off heads, on a great thing like an overgrown rat trap. All of which is bad enough, though it is all one when a man has overed the post; but in Rooshia—which is worst of all—to punish a man they makes a *soldier*

of him. And that was how the Grand Duke wanted to gammon me. A many an old woman I've seen do the same with a knife in her hand, when she 'ticed a chicken to cut its throat."

At length, the gardens of the palace of Strelna appeared in view; and they drew up opposite to a petty traktirs—a kind of low tavern, where, under pretext of baiting the horses, they waited till the Lieutenant was joined by a confederate, with whom he entered into lengthened converse.

"We are baffled again," said Alexius at length with visible disappointment; "the Grand Duke does not go out this morning excepting to the riding school. The Duchess had sent word that at twelve she will walk in the grounds as the day is so dry and fine, and there will see you; but unluckily, there is no means of getting you in unnoticed; all the Grand Duke's people are about, and he himself at home and stirring—it is impossible. I really dare not venture to present you."

"Are those the palace grounds skirting the road before us?" said Bob.

"Those are the grounds where she must be walking now."

"Look you, Sir," said Bob, "if the lady expects me, she would not be much startled if I were to walk up to her. If I *do* look like a highwayman on a trip to Tyburn in this here suit of black, I may be also mistook for a parson. If you could only point out near abouts where I should fall in with her, I could be over that paling in the twinkling of a bed-post, you know."

"If you will only risk it," replied Alexius. "The case is desperate:—if we miss this opportunity, another

may not for days present itself; and your master writes me that time presses. This person will perhaps succeed in announcing you to the Princess; and at all events will make a signal to inform us whether she be actually in the grounds. If under these circumstances you will venture, say so."

"There is no question of risking, when one ought. I must obey the master whose bread I eat," said Bob; but uppermost in his mind was the thought of her who had been his young mistress.

The Lieutenant's confederate departed; and they remained beside the park paling waiting for the signal for Bob to climb over it, and repair to the spot which had been pointed out. Both were silent.

"I hope you will succeed," said Alexius at length. "Notwithstanding the sunshine, there is a something lugubrious in the scene before us—in the dry frosty air, the snowless ground, the wind raising up those withered leaves in eddies, which is not inspiriting—those old oaks, bare and stripped of their summer foliage, look like—"

"They look queer sticks, no doubt," interrupted Bob; "but was not that the signal?"

"Oh yes, if that be our friend upon the road. Does he lift off his cap?"

"Then thank you kindly, Sir," said Bob. "You've done a good act this day. Though the start is a rum one as leads me to trespass on these premises for the sake of circumwenting a lady; so here goes for the Princess;" and Bob, touching his hat respectfully, vaulted nimbly over the paling.

"To the right," soliloquised Bob; "and then the alley to the left. Here it is; and then along the clump of firs and evergreens till you meet a bench and a

path to the left. Here it is too, all right and tight as a trivet." Here he heard voices; and he felt for the first time a little trepidation at the idea of addressing the great lady. "I had quite as lief meet her husband," said Bob, as he turned the corner, and his wish was gratified; for he stood face to face with the terrible Grand Duke.

"If this isn't a regular man-trap!" ejaculated the groom.

The Grand Duke, whose temper appeared as irritable as a volcano in a state of irruption, was accompanied by Generals Rhoda and Le Gendre, on whom he was venting his ill-humour, when his eye rested on Bob Bridle.

"Who is that fellow?" he roared out, and his two satellites instantly seized on the intruder.

"Gentlemen," said Bob, "I did not mean to run away with either yourselves or this here park and grounds. Don't stifle me!"

"Who are you? What are you? Who let you in here?" reiterated the Duke.

"The park paling," said Bob, "which by your Eyencsse's leave, wasn't high enough to keep me out."

"Perhaps a conspirator, your Highness!" said General Le Gendre.

"Well," said the Grand Duke, "he is a bold rogue; and God bless me, unhand him; unhand him!—I have defiled your mothers!—I know him well. This is a better man than any of you—what there is of him. Which of you will try me with the lance or sabre? And this abortion has baffled your master; but what is he doing here? How didst thou get in here?"

"Over the fence!" replied Bob, who had doffed his hat and was pulling his fore lock with respect.

"Well!" said the Grand Duke benignantly, "I took you at first sight for one of the missionaries—one of the rascals who want to introduce Bible and Temperance societies amongst the Emperor's soldiers, to divert their attention from their duties; but your coming here, though I owe you a favour or so, is irregular. It is not *po formè*—I don't like it."

"More is the pity," replied Bob, "that it isn't pleasant to your Eyeness."

"Well," said the Duke, "by the Lord! I never saw a man sit more firmly in his saddle; but you want something of me, I suppose? You have come in a bold way to ask it—a way I wouldn't advise you to try again; but what is it?—let us hear."

Bob fumbled with his hat, kneading the rim with his fingers, but said nothing.

"Speak out," said General Le Gendre; "his Imperial Highness wishes to hear."

"Your Eyeness is very good," said Bob.

"Well," exclaimed the Grand Duke, who was losing patience, "speak out—I have defiled thy mother!—what is it? — my promise is given — don't be bashful."

"Don't be timid," said General Le Gendre, "but speak out. His Imperial Highness wills you should."

"Well then," said Bob, "since his Imperious Eyeness is so good, if I was sure of not offending—"

"Gad's blood!" thundered the Duke, "speak out, man; don't stay mincing your words."

"I should like—"

"Go on," said General Le Gendre with a nudge.

"Ask what you like," said the Duke.

"Speak up," interrupted Le Gendre. "He is alarmed, your Imperial Highness—timid—bashful!"

"Come, speak up, what do you want?" said Constantine.

"Some private conversation with your lady," replied Bob, at length, with resolute modesty.

The two Generals looked anxiously at the Grand Duke, and the Grand Duke raised his shaggy eyebrows in unspeakable astonishment.

"What does the fellow want? A private conversation with my wife—"

"If you would be so good," replied Bob with composure.

The Grand Duke looked in amazement at his followers, who returned a look of unspeakable horror at the intruder's incredible audacity.

"Well," said Constantine at length, with more surprise than anger, "of all the bold rascals that ever I met, you beat them. What in the name of impudence, can you want with my wife?"

"I want to speak with her," replied Bob with simplicity.

"But what do you want to say? People only go to the Duchess to get at me. Here, fool! you are at the fountain head. I can give you what you want at once."

"I don't wish to *take*," replied Bob, and very quickly unfolding the emerald bracelet which the Duchess of Lowicz had sent to Horace, "your Duchess has lost this, I wish to *bring* it back to her."

"Where did you pick that bracelet up?" said the Duke, "I remember well having seen it upon her arm. If that is all you want with the Duchess give it to me."

"By your leave," said Bob, "I'd rather give it to the right owner."

"He is a determined rascal," said the Grand Duke, "I think you were disinclined to serve."

"If you have no objection."

"I wear the Emperor's uniform myself," observed Constantine.

"And I have livery already," answered Bob.

"By the way," said the Duke, "you are in the service of that French Count; like master like man. There is many a foreign diplomatist be-starred and be-titled, who is presented to the Duchess, who has not half this fellow's value, and who comes the proxy of a royal master not worth half *his* master. I wish I had a hundred thousand, or say two hundred thousand like him, with the power of making two into one. Come, come, you shall go straight to the Duchess."

They turned rapidly—for Constantine was impetuous in everything—into several alleys till they perceived two female figures in the distance.

"Look, there she is," said the Grand Duke; "now go and say what you have to say; but remember after this favour I grant no others, so it is no use to ask any of her. Come, gentlemen, to the riding-school," and so Bob felt himself rudely thrust forward by the shoulders, and then left alone.

When he saw the Princess advancing, he felt unusally nervous and embarrassed.

"It's all these cursed trousers as makes me feel so awkward," said Bob to himself, "though I dare say if I was to complain, people would tell me that I should feel more so without 'em."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE lady accompanying the Duchess was no other than Anna Obrasoff—pale, thoughtful, clad in the deepest mourning.

The sorrowful, yet determined gravity of her countenance, showed that at a single step she had crossed the chequered interval which leads insensibly from youth's sanguine visions to the dis-illusions of maturer years.

Great disappointment and cruel usage, though commonly souring the temper and hardening the heart to cynicism, still refine, and purify, and soften where its inherent nobility enables it to resist their action. For the many whom misfortune has misanthropically inclined, we all remember a few whose sorrow-chastened spirit breathes in their words, beams in their eyes, and so pervades their actions as to draw insensibly the sympathies of old and young, inspiring an indefinite and instinctive confidence. So it is with Anna Obrasoff; she has passed simultaneously through two of the three greatest trials which can ever mark a woman's existence—the loss of a mother, and the sudden undeception which had dispelled the dream of her first love. And yet, there she stands with heroic self-control and a sublimity of devotion,

pleading eloquently with the Duchess for her early friend and recent rival. She joins her supplications to the homely and earnest persuasions of Bob Bridle, whose hard features seem for the first time marked by the lines of anxious thought.

"For only look you, kind and noble lady," said Bob, "our fellow creatures, mortal man or female woman, was not made for slavery; but then, though it may not strike a body when they sees a great coarse cart-horse, with ragged fetlocks and a sleepy eye, and action like a snail's, a-toiling, overloaded in a heavy waggon; although I say, it may not strike one, shameful as it is to overwork a living beast, which our bibles says it is, still what is that to when we see a young blood-horse—a high-bred, noble filly—with its legs like a light deer's, its sleek coat like the satin of your cloak, and its quick eyes bright as your'n, with straining sinews, and with bursting veins, and with wrung withers, a-breaking its poor heart in a vile cart? Lord love you. Ma'am, I see that you shed tears; what wonder? I could cry myself, and I *would* cry, till half my eyes was cried away, if that would mend the matter, even though I had to ride all my remaining days in spectacles; but then it wouldn't. I have known that young Miss Blanche, God bless her! from her childhood up'ards. I have seen her tended with all the care her uncle's orders, and the love of servants could bestow; she might have eaten gold if she had relished it, and have walked abroad upon a carpet of fine kerseymere. I have seen her good, and kind, and gentle, grow up like a playful colt, with the wide world before her, like a meadow in the sunshine, when the May is a-flowering in the hedges, and the cowslips in the grass. And

now, where is she, and what is she? Her husband, too, I have seen him month after month as a guest at my master's table; and then I have seen him treated, as we do not even treat dogs in England, barring that scientific gentlemen gets hold on 'em. Think on this, noble lady, since you *are* a princess."

"As for your former mistress," said the Duchess, "I have already interested myself in her fate; but what can I do in this case? It is horrible, very horrible; but I fear the utmost I can do will scarce enable me to save even her."

"And yet," replied Bob, "that would be only half to do a job as won't admit of splitting. He is her husband now—they are man and wife—one flesh. You will say, perhaps, how came Miss Blanche to marry? But it's a folly which all respectable people has committed since the world begun, excepting Adam and Eve, which they could not have found a clergyman. Believe me, she will not leave him; she has too much game and blood about her, that young lady. She will run too honest, I will pound it, to let herself be saved alone. You cannot therefore purvide for the wife's safety without the husband's. And he, do you think that he can be so cur-like, so rotten-hearted, as to leave his sister behind him? Such a sister!"

"The argument of the faithful servitor is full of truth, Janna," said Anna Obrasoff.

"Alas! alas! dear Anna," replied the Duchess, in Russ; "woe is me that it should be so—to say nothing of my debt of gratitude to the Count—you know how deep is my sympathy with these miseries, you know how irresistible would be your prayer. But then, my Constantine has no feeling for such misfortune. Class and rank are things inviolable for him; the

slave must remain in his servitude as the soldier in the ranks. You know that he pretends no sympathies to which he is a stranger. Rude as he seems—and as perhaps he is—he has always scorned the affectation of his brothers, Alexander and Nicolai, to be the protectors of the slave against his Lord. 'Whilst we have twenty millions of slaves in the domain of our own family, and mean to keep them thus,' he says, 'it is contemptible in an Emperor to interfere with petty serf-holders. If these Lords are not submissive, let us crush them without such a pitiful subterfuge.' How then can I ever hope to interest him in the fate of these poor victims?"

"You *will* befriend us?" said Bob.

"Oh! if I only could," replied the Duchess. "But I know that as long as the master keeps within the limits of the law, his Highness will not meddle between the Baron and his serf."

"Oh! he cannot surely say *you* nay to any thing?"

The Duchess shook her head mournfully.

"What a brute!" thought Bob; and then, after a moment's pause, he said aloud, with more emotion than he had yet betrayed, "But my good, my blessed Lady! you will not let 'em all go to the wall without a trial? You are soft-hearted, but do not let us all be soft-headed. Where there is a will there is a way. If they could only be brought to St. Petersburg, if they could be only got out of the clutches of that white-livered .... Rooshian Prince."

"He is right," said Anna; "if we could at least gain time."

"There are those gentlemen with cocked hats and cocktail feathers," suggested Bob, "who sit so stiff on their kibitka's without springs, and who whisk off

the first Lords in the land they say, which no one knows where they comes from or where they goes to —as no wonder they shouldn't, since they never asks —there are plenty of those gentlemen about St. Petersburg."

"He means the feldjagers of the Emperor," said Anna; "and in truth if, under any pretext, the Grand Duke could be induced to have them conveyed to St. Petersburg, no one—not of the highest rank of the empire—dares resist or question such an order, or comment on it. He is quite right; who, high or low, dares ask who is the prisoner seated next to the feldjager, what is his transgression, and whence he comes, or whither he is going?"

"That is true," replied the Duchess; "but in St. Petersburg it would be but the reprieve of a few weeks. Alas!" she continued in Russ to Anna, "I have no power, since my Constantine has formally abandoned all his claims to the throne at my persuasion, no prayer of mine is listened to now that I am no longer needed."

The Princess spoke truly; but she did not, till the death of Constantine, learn that the Emperor's seeming indifference was in reality an implacable aversion. He, the autocrat, the omnipotent, could not forgive that he owed his throne to the intercession of a Pole and of a woman; he could not forgive that the Russo-Greek church, with all its pretensions to immutability—not only in the dogmas and doctrines of early Christianity, but in its very forms—should on account of this woman for the first time have sanctioned a divorce, which till then it had ever condemned.

Yet so it had been: the first wife of Constantine, a

Princess of Saxe-Coburg, was living when Constantine married Jane Grudzinska; but their common husband was resolved that his second marriage should be quite legitimate, so he referred the question to the synod of the Russian Church.

The synod—made acquainted with the Emperor Alexander's wish that his brother's marriage should be somehow legitimatised—was sorely puzzled. It had hitherto rigorously prohibited and severely branded all divorces, under any pretext whatever; but what is ever an article of faith or practice with the synod of the Russian Church when weighed against the wishes of a Tsar? It complaisantly declared the second marriage to be valid and licit, routing out some old text from the writings of Saint Basil, Archbishop of Cappadocia and Pontus, and straining it into authority as vague as the Sybilline predictions.

But then, Constantine was not entirely to be trusted; he might in some fit of insanity, at some inopportune moment, have changed his mind, and the Duchess was still useful to soothe him into reason; besides, she was the only thing on earth he loved, in his savage way; and to offer her insult or injury, would have been like meddling with the cubs of a tigress, the most certain way of rousing him to madness. But when the husband was no more, then—if the reader be unacquainted with that passage of history, he may glean how she was treated, either from the trial now pending before the Courts of Berlin, between the creditors of the Grudzinski family and the Emperor Nicholas, or from some notions from the brief mention at the conclusion of these volumes. We must now return to Bob Bridle, who replied, to the Duchess, after some cogitation:

"If they was once in Petersburg, couldn't one have passports for 'em to start with; and if they was once out of the country could they be brought back again?"

"What would be easier?" said Anna, eagerly. "It must be possible to get them foreign passports; and once beyond the frontier, they would be saved."

"It could be done, but only by deceiving *him*; and *he* would never forgive me," replied the Duchess.

"Heaven will," said Bob.

"Your conscience will absolve you of the deceit," observed Anna.

"I must try what can be done," continued the Duchess. "My word is pledged to the Count, and he calls on me to redeem it in the name of humanity. And yet if I succeed in this, it may deprive me of the means of serving hundreds and hundreds. I am, you know, but like an icicle, which without inherent warmth, refracts the sun's ray."

"Or which reflects the glare of a destroying comet, rendering that heat beneficent," said Anna to herself.

"Or cooling down hell-fire," thought Bob, "and making it feel comfortable."

"If that light," proceeded the Duchess, "be withdrawn, all power ceases for me; though, after all, perhaps it may be wisdom to prefer the certain and immediate good it lies within our power to do the few, to that which is uncertain and remote towards the many; for after all, we are but creatures of the present. In sacrificing the present to the future. I might die within a week, a day, an hour!"

"Be on the safe side, lady," said Bob, "and then how shouldn't you live with so many to heap blessin's on you?"

Bob Bridle was arranging in his mind certain

biblical quotations, which he thought would tell with great effect in persuading—the fraud of Jacob, which without approving, he thought might be cited as a precedent, when, as he was about to argue "there was a question not of chousing one of one's brethren out of his birthright, but of restoring three of them to it," he was, however, prevented by the Duchess, who said resolutely :—

"Well then, be it. When to serve these poor victims I risk that influence which would have shielded so many;—I must not think on *his* wrath; —I must not even think on this deceit:—I will only remember thy sacrifice, my gentle Anna."

Anna heaved a deep sigh, and Bob's eyes lit up with a gleam of satisfaction. Poor Bob! whilst pleading so earnestly was, perhaps, not proving the least abnegation of the three; and he would have sighed too—if he had ever done such a thing in his life—at the prospect of losing his grey, and of being left in the heart of Russia, which he knew would be the result of the success of his mission.

"As for the foreign wife of the slave, your late mistress, we must cause instant search to be made, for she has been some days missing. I will consult on the proper steps to be taken, with those who can advise. I will watch my opportunity with the Grand-Duke; and I will give you some one to conduct you where you must wait, and be prepared to start at a moment's notice for Kalouga. Is there anything I can do for such a trust-worthy, and courageous servitor?"

"Nothing," replied Bob, "my sweet and noble lady; but to succeed, and make all straight."

* * * * *

"What!" said the Grand-Duke, whose brow was lowering, "again?"

"Oh! this time, Constantine, I am not interfering with your justice," replied the Princess; "this time I myself demand it."

Constantine raised his grizzled eyebrows in astonishment, and then rubbing his hands together with a savage grin, he said:—

"You?—Well—well!—who has wronged?—who has offended?—who has vexed it?—They shall smart for it: I have defiled their mothers!"

"Constantine, as I have been not offended, but angered, I wish to punish—when I please, and as I please."

"Which will be not at all!—I know your soft heart," said the Grand-Duke; "but they shall not escape me."

"Then I will tell you no more, Constantine.—So, you refuse my request?—you will not give me power to do as I think fit?"

"Well—well; it would be a pity they should escape, who have done anything to rouse the indignation of my soul—my gentle dove. So that you do not ask me for reprieves and pardons, do what you will:—at least whatever I can do for you; and if it be not more you know. that is your own fault, Janna.—You would not let me be an emperor—you would not be an empress!"

Here a cloud crossed the Grand Duke's brow again, and his eyes shewing the red veins with which the whites were netted, as he rolled them, seemed to become instantaneously bloodshot with the rising gust of passion.

"Oh! it is so little that I ask," said the Duchess,

carrying his rough hand to her lips: "I only wish to frighten some one. I wish a wild young nobleman to be placed for a week under the strict surveillance of the governor of the province—kept incommunicate—"

"Is that all!—Let it be a twelvemonth!"

"And then—and then I wish a request—an order—to be forwarded to that young French Count to return to St. Petersburg, and for three of the other slaves to be sent me here, that I may question them."

"And what is all this for?"

"That is my secret," said the Duchess, who felt her heart dying within her, as she made an effort to smile archly, "you shall know all by and by when my plot is matured."

"Some folly!" said Constantine. "Well, I will send Le Gendre to Benkendorf in my name:—you tell him what you want."

CHAPTER XVII.

In an apartment of the police office sits an official, in whom the reader might have recognized the Chinovnik, who at the post-house so cruelly maltreated his slave the ostler. He has left the department of the minister of justice, to enter the secret police, into which the judicious use of his savings has obtained him admission, and his quickness procured rapid promotion.

In an adjoining room some dozen clerks, over whom he presides, are looking through the police biography of different individuals, for in the secret office are kept the copies of annual passports which every one not enslaved or in the service is under the heaviest penalties obliged to take out—or the copies of the imperial commissions, and to each of these are attached such extracts from all the reports of the innumerable spies as may contain any mention of that individual's name, besides a full account of all his transactions, however trifling, with any of the departments of the government.

Thus, many an unlucky wight, who fancies that his insignificance has shielded him from all notice, has volumes and volumes of manuscript attached to his name; and whenever he falls under the displeasure of the secret office, he is startled and confounded by the minuteness with which the most trifling circumstan-

ces are recalled to his memory, and if there be nothing wherewith he may have to reproach himself—he dares not hope that those whose knowledge of so much of his past life is more accurate than that which his own memory furnishes — if really disinterested in their judgment—will doubt the truth of the innumerable calumnies which are sure to have crept into these voluminous reports.

The secret remarks on every man, therefore, always afford the means of ruining him, by judiciously extracting the damning passages; and under this hair-suspended sword lives (with half a score exceptions) every one in the empire.

In the complex administration of this Chinese government, those who spy are themselves spied upon; and those who make the dangerous records, at which thousands of pens are day and night employed, live in the consciousness that their own deeds are being equally recorded.

If indeed malignity, untruth, or misrepresentation were not inevitably the basis of this espionage, its effects might be in some measure salutary; but used as it is, not as a check on the all-pervading vice and corruption, but to place every man hopelessly in the power of every superior, its only result is to make each individual bend to those above him with blind submissiveness, and accept with passive resignation the most unmerited persecution when he incurs their displeasure, aware that it is always in their power, if irritated by resistance to give a colour to still greater severity than that from which he suffers.

Our friend Vasili Petrovitch was ushered into this apartment, which he entered with many bows.

"What dost thou want now, Batushka?" said the

Chinovnik; "why dost thou still insist on seeing me? Thou hast demanded justice and obtained it. Our Lord the Emperor is prompt in his decision: the agressors have been degraded to the ranks, declared incapable of ever rising; and this day at noon, they are despatched to the army of the Caucausus, as food for the yatagans of the Tcherkesses."

"It is true, your excellency," replied Vasili humbly, "but I should wish to take home my Katinka."

"Don't excellency me, I am only colonel."

"But you soon will be general."

"Hark ye, Vasili Petrovitch! dost thou remember what happened when thou didst last demand thy little wife?"

"Yes," replied Vasili, changing from red to deadly white, as fear and jealousy alternated in his recollection. "Yes, his excellency the general was very hard upon me; I led the life of the damned for the ensuing week," and in fact his wan and careworn aspect attested the truth of his assertion. "But then I understood his excellency to have said yesterday that her examination was over, that I might take her back when I pleased, so I kept her from plaguing him."

"Vasili Petrovitch, I think thou presumest; I think that, because two young men of the first families in the empire have been ruined and degraded through thy instrumentality, thou fanciest in thy folly that thou art more than the dust which those who wear the imperial button shake from their feet. Know then, that they were punished for outrageously daring to personate the servants of the secret office; but thou art already noted as overweening and troublesome. His excellency's good humour saved thee once, and, though he has done with thy Katinka now, that is only as far as he is concerned. I wish now to examine her; the

examination may last weeks, or months, or years; perhaps, when I am satisfied, they may insist on examining her in some inferior department; I cannot say, thou must settle it with them. At present ruin hangs over thee; so be discreet, humble, and submissive, and begone without a reply."

At this moment Katinka with her French bonnet and cloak on, entered from an inner room. She started on seeing Vasili, but instantly recovering her composure, vouchsafed him an indifferent nod.

"Come," said she to the Chinovnik, "I thought you were ready; and I want the lace of this boot tucked in."

"Tuck in that lace," said the official to Vasili Petrovitch so imperatively that the old man knelt down trembling between terror and jealousy.

Katinka unblushingly held out her little foot, shod in a grey satin boot; and then giving her Lord an impudent nod, she put her arm in the Colonel Samoilov's, and walked out, scarcely suppressing her laughter, as she left her grey bearded husband still upon his knees unable to rise from the emotion which overpowered him.

* * * * *

In another chamber of this same building, a personage of very much higher rank than the Colonel Samoilov, was seated at a table, consulting a sort of diary. About the fourteenth on his list, he called for Dimitri Gregorief. Dimitri, the valet of Isaakoff, who had been waiting for seven weary hours, was ushered in by an officer of gendarmerie.

But the humility of the great man in admitting so humble an individual to his presence was not without sufficient motive.

"You have a letter for me?"

"Here, your Excellency."

His Excellency having opened the letter upon his knee, so that the intervening table prevented any one but himself from seeing its contents; and being satisfied that it contained fifteen bank notes and the halves of another fifteen of a thousand roubles each, said to Dimitri at length:

"This business shall be managed for thy master; but to-day it is impossible."

"If I dared make so bold, as to explain to your Excellency the humble prayer of my master, it urgently craves that you would take immediate steps for the protection of his interests."

"Look ye," replied his Excellency, "I can serve him, and will serve him. The Grand Duke will rescind his order the moment one can reach his ear; but that is impossible either to-day or to-night, or indeed until this time to-morrow, then it shall be done. You have my promise to your master, now go."

Dimitri, who dared not remonstrate with one so high in the secret office, and so powerful, felt for a moment convinced of the inutility of their tardy interference; but then he bethought him that, if slow, it would be both sure and effective; and that, with boldness, intelligence, and money, he might yet succeed in impeding the design of the adverse party till he had the opportunity—which the delay of a single day would offer him—of checkmating it altogether, so he bowed himself out.

"Thirty thousand roubles—hum!" said the police mandarin to himself. "Now I remember too, this Isaakoff offered me a hundred thousand to ruin Bamberg. But then Isaakoff is rich, of ancient

family; he has not served; he has lived abroad; he stinks in the Imperial nostrils. Fifty thousand would have decided me from any other man; for though Bamberg is useful, I do not like him. Yes, I must get rid of Bamberg; and it is true that I can do it safely enough, if I strike Bamberg first, and then come down mercilessly upon Isaakoff. Yes, it is a combination I must bear in mind, and see to."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Bob Bridle was conducted back by the person who had made the signal from the park gate, and who, as the Lieutenant Alexius explained to him, was to lead him to a place in St. Petersburg, where he must wait prepared to start at any hour of the day or night; and then, pressing his hand and congratulating him on the success of his mission, which he considered as assured, Alexius took his leave.

Bob Bridle's guide was taciturn and uncommunicative. Russians are proverbially reserved; but, what loquacity would not have been tamed in the Grand Duke's household? As the sledge traversed the city, its progress was arrested by a motley crowd hurrying towards one of the many market-places.

"It is an execution," said his companion. "Our sledge can neither proceed nor turn back, till it is over; let us push through the crowd on foot."

"Come," replied Bob; and, as they walked along, a kind of sleigh passed them in the midst of a procession of the civil and military police.

On this sleigh were seated the culprit and the executioner. The culprit was a grave old man;

his cheeks were wan, his hairs were few and grey, and his ragged beard was frosted as much by age as by the damp that condensed upon it in the wintry air. Bob Bridle thought that he had seen his face before; and so he had; for it was Ivan Petrovitch, the roskolnik or sectarian.

The executioner was a man of middle age and robust build, whose features and aspect were the very type of coarseness and brutality, heightened by habitual intemperance and the present excitement of liquor. The consciousness of filling an office which men regard with dread and horror, had added to the natural ferocity of the assassin; for it is from such a class of criminals that he is commonly selected.

The handling of the knout demands a long apprenticeship, besides a natural aptitude of nerve and muscle. The chief executioner, always himself a criminal condemned to the punishment which he inflicts—the only capital punishment in the Russian empire—receives a free pardon, and is sent home at the expiration of twelve years, during which he is kept in durance excepting when led out to operate. In his cell he gives instruction to his pupils, whom it is his duty to instruct in the horrible art of torturing, which he has derived from his predecessor. They practise daily upon a sort of lay figure; and he shows them exactly where and how to deal their blows, so as only to cut into the muscle of the loins when it is merely a civil criminal, a murderer, or a felon; how to inflict immediate death, by making the victim dislocate his own neck; or how to render death inevitable in a day or two, by curling the lash scientifically round the body to make it cut into the peritoneum,

or tear the intestines, according to the instructions he receives. The accomplished knout-master can hit every time within a space the size of a crown-piece, and he can smash a brick-bat into dust at a single blow of the formidable instrument which he wields.

When he has served his time, and is succeeded by a pupil—a vacancy occurring in the little college by this promotion,—a recruit is sought for among the prisoners capitally condemned; and it is not a little to the credit of the lower order of Russians that, even among those knout-threatened and Siberia-doomed, he is not easy to be found.

This sledge pauses before every *kabak* or spirit shop; for, according to an old custom, the executioner has a right to demand a dram of vodka at every one by which the procession passes. This day, the only day that he gets abroad from his prison, and that he enjoys the privilege of calling everywhere for liquor, is therefore for him a day of merriment and rejoicing. He leers horribly, and utters some obscene jest as he tosses off his dram. The spirit-seller crosses himself, and breaks the glass to pieces when he has emptied it, and the sleigh drives on again.

The old man, sitting erect in pious abstraction, is alike prepared for martyrdom, and even now doubtful of its crown, when he thinks on Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, delivered from the furnace, and on Daniel from the lion's den. His voice, enfeebled by suffering, is heard exclaiming as they move along:

"'They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

"'I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee.

"'He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he

giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.

"'Woe! woe! woe! to the Niconite. Woe to his cursed children. Woe to you, deluded brethren. Why eat ye of the poison into which the false priest Nicon has changed the bread of life?'"

The crowd presses closely together; but it is quite silent, except where here and there a new comer asks what is the matter, and is answered, "that it is the roskolnik going to execution, for having spit in the face of the Metropolitan of Novogorod and St. Petersburg." But the multitude, though, with a few exceptions, of the established religion of the empire, lets not one sign of satisfaction escape, nor one comment pass its many lips; and as the old iron-monger continues to heap his curses upon Nicon (the patriarch who changed the old version of the Scriptures and opened the way to innovation), as he grows more violent in his denunciations and reproaches, a feeling of uneasiness and shame seems to pervade them. For the people of the modern Russo-Greek church do not reciprocate the contempt entertained for them by the *Stare-vertsi* or men of the old faith, who, since the great roskol or split, have been growing more austere in their practices, whilst the imperial church has increased its forms and superstitions. There seems to be a misgiving about them that the Stare-vertsi may after all be right.

At length the place of execution appears in view. It is lined by the military, who keep back the crowd. The military governor of St. Petersburg is there, surrounded by his staff. Stars, orders, tags, tassels, feathers glitter and wave upon their uniforms.

"'They gather themselves together against the

soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood,'" said the old fanatic; and at this moment, just as Bob Bridle's eyes are attracted by a wooden bar stuck at right angles on a short perpendicular post, like a T, with two iron rings affixed to each of its extremities, the crowd closes before him.

It is only after many minutes, and a great deal of labour, that the groom again succeeds in obtaining a view of what is passing.

Ivan Petrovitch is now stripped and bound down by a rope passing through the iron rings of the kobilitza. The first blows of the knout are descending, its mighty thong wielded by the two arms of the executioner, who steps back and makes a bound forward as he strikes, adding the weight of his body to his muscular strength.

Three or four blows, given with hideous precision on the same spot, bruise and macerate the flesh to the depth of a couple of inches, and then thus loosened, at the next the tongue of the knout is made to take it as it were by suction, and to tear it out in a long collop.

The executioner pauses, with a savage grin at his dexterity, and his victim shrieks out:

"I saw her—oh! oh! I saw her—drunk with the blood of saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus! Oh! oh!—woe! woe! her plagues shall come in one day."

Here the blows of the knout deprived him of breath and utterance.

"Oh! oh! death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire! Woe! woe! O people! Woe to the Niconite!—woe to the Antichrist!"

The crowd shudder, the knout descends again, and when the executioner next pauses between his blows as he often does to change the tongue of the knout, or dip it in powdered brimstone, to prevent the blood from softening it, when he wishes it to be hard—nothing is heard but the low moaning of the victim. At length he is detached, insensible, from the Kobilitza — his forehead marked with the hot iron, and being thrown upon the sleigh—some mats are heaped upon him, the sleigh drives away, and as usual the bystanders shower upon the rude covering the copper pieces which are to purchase the culprit some indulgence from his jailors, or on his dreary pilgrimage towards Siberia, if he recovers to undertake it.

These are usually disposed of by anticipation to the knout-master, to bribe him to be merciful—but this time neither has the old ironmonger made the customary compromise with him, nor would his orders have allowed the executioner to engage in it.

When the vehicle draws toward the gate of the prison, he puts his hand under the mat; he knows that his mangled victim will not recover—but he may linger—no!—the kopek pieces are all his own—the old sectarian has been dead many minutes. The frost has seized his extremities already, and they are cold and hard as stone.

Ivan Petrovitch when brought before his judges, had persisted in his denunciations. In his wild enthusiasm he had declared that all his sect were ready to repeat the outrage of which he had been guilty, on the person of the Metropolitan. He was capitally condemned. The Metropolitan interceded for his pardon with the Emperor—the Emperor was inexorable—the

prelate suggested his confinement as a lunatic, but he was sternly told to mind his own concerns. He desisted. Perhaps he remembered that the humble and learned Philaretes, the Metropolitan of Moscow, had been snubbed in his own Cathedral, even by Alexander, for the freedom of a sermon—perhaps the manner of the refusal recalled a truth he was forgetting, that he was only in reality a subordinate in that hierarchy, of which the Emperor was the hereditary chief master; and hence, as the most deeply interested party, the most fitting judge of what should be done to uphold its dignity.

Bob Bridle, full of horror and disgust, now followed his companion, who installed him in a room in a Track-tirtchiks, close to the market-place.

He was still musing over the scene he had witnessed, when he was suddenly accosted by a familiar voice. He started—it was Dimitri's!

The sudden appearance of Dimitri, whom Bob had left at Moscow with the Prince Isaakoff, in whose confidence he was daily gaining ground, struck him as boding no good; for his natural shrewdness told him the improbability of his having casually found him within so short of space of time in a vast and crowded city.

"How very odd!—Bob Bobovitch—I beg your pardon, you do not like the name—how very odd that we should meet," said Dimitri, advancing to embrace him, an attempt which Bob repulsed, by holding out his hand with dignity, and offering him three fingers as he remembered to have seen Mr. Mortimer do.

"Not so very odd that people should meet when they both walks into the same room."

"You do not mean to say that you are here?"

"No," replied Bob, "you see I'm over the way."

Dimitri, who knew of old the impracticability of Bob, soon ceased to question him when he found him incommunicative: but he proposed that they should discuss a bottle of wine to their happy meeting and old friendship."

"The meeting is so happy," muttered Bob, "that I'd as soon have put a limb out of joint; and the friendship so old that I don't remember it"—but as his present duty was to wait where he was, it struck him that by drinking with Dimitri, he would at least so long keep him under his own eye, and away from perpetrating mischief.

He therefore not only accepted his offer, but aware from his experience that he could very easily "sew up" his companion, without being himself in the slightest degree affected—he encouraged him to drink. But notwithstanding all his efforts to appear convivial, Dimitri at length rose, and quitted him abruptly.

As Bob attempted to detain him, he felt his head reel and his legs so unsteady, that he was obliged to resume his seat. A strange heaviness weighed on his eyelids, an irresistable somnolence stole over him.

"What! what!" said Bob to himself, "is my wits wool-gathering with that thimble full? Have I come to be dru .. dru .. drunk, which a Bridle never was before; nor a Horseflys either, 'cepting with do—do—dog's nose. "Damn that Dimitri—which I wouldn't a swore if he hadn't a made me drunk—may the devil founder him if he has'nt *hocused* my drink."

The groom was right: Dimitri had given him an opiate, the strength of which would utterly have disabled any ordinary individual and which had overpowered even his iron constitution. Nevertheless, its effect

was rather on his body than on his brain; to which his wiry nerves did not give easy access. His reason was not distorted, although he felt that it was about to sink into a state of torpidity, and he had presence of mind enough to open the little moveable pane in the hermetically closed windows of the apartment, and to wet a napkin, and wrap it about his head before he sank to sleep.

* * * * *

"How unfortunate that these English can never be trusted where liquor is in the way!" said the Lieutenant Alexius. "But he wakes at last. Come, come."

"Wo, wo, there Lucy; what would you?" said Bob, still dreaming, "what, Lucifer, would you hurt them as rubs you down, would you be turned out like an uncombed dirty devil of a Rooshian?"

"Come, come, rouse yourself, if you can; it is past seven o'clock."

"Past seven?" said Bob, rubbing his eyes and fumbling for the key of the stable, "I—I have overslept myself."

When Bob was thoroughly awakened, and restored to consciousness the Lieutenant Alexius—having assured himself of the fact, and having been made acquainted with the manner of his inebriation—informed him that he must start directly.

He gave into his hands a parcel addressed to Count Horace, containing an order for the government of Kalouga to afford the Count every facility in proceeding to St. Petersburg in such manner as he should think fit, taking with him two of the Prince Isaakoff's slaves, without allowing them, under any pretext whatever, to be impeded or delayed.

The dreaded signature of the Grand Master was

appended to this order, and Bob Bridle was further directed to convey to Count Horace by word of mouth, the plan which the Princess of Lowicz had combined for their evasion and her instructions how to act.

Without confiding in any one agent, she had cautiously taken the advice, and profited by the experience of several competent persons, who were all separately anxious to secure her good graces, by the zeal with which they served her in a matter which appeared without difficulty or danger.

Thus to General Le Gendre who was, in point of fact a spy of Count Benkendorf's on the Grand Duke whose confidence he betrayed, she had stated her wish to interrogate two of the Prince Isaakoff's slaves as well as Count Horace; but so that they should not be in any way influenced by the menaces of their master, whilst at the same time so privately that it would be at her option to frighten instead of punishing.

The General who had received the Grand Duke's order to attend to her instructions, declared that nothing could be easier. The benevolence of the Duchess satisfied him that she would be guilty of no severity which would ever lead to discussion in higher quarters; and if there were anything in this mystery, —for in all the terrible panoply of its power the secret office of which he was the real servitor, starts even at shadows, and grows pale at the thought of any secret undivined, — what could be a more ready means of ascertaining it than acceding to her wish?

When the Duchess found how easily her demand would be complied with, she further observed that being neither sure that her suspicions were justly founded, nor that the Prince Isaakoff would attempt to prevent

the departure of his slaves, nor that the Count would judge fit to bring them to St. Petersburg, it was her wish that the whole matter should be kept as private as possible. With the tact of a woman anxious to carry her point, she so introduced the name of Anna Obrasoff as to lead Le Gendre to believe, that it was perhaps after all a mediation in some lover's quarrel, and he therefore suggested placing the document above named, at the disposal of her protégé, and merely despatching a courier to acquaint the governor, that an order had been issued from the secret office which he was to attend to if called upon by the Count de Montressan, so to do, and further instructing his Excellency in that event to detain the Prince Isaakoff and keep him incommunicate till he should hear further.

The Prince Isaakoff belonged to that class marked out by the personal antipathy of the Emperor, the old and wealthy nobility of the empire who keep away from court and office as far as circumstances will allow. The desire of the Grand Duke for his temporary detention, conveyed as it was by Le Gendre —a secret agent of the secret office, who would have detected in it anything dangerous or important,—was therefore a request too trifling to demand even the consideration of the Grand Master, who at once acceded to it.

After thus far making use of Le Gendre, through another channel,—one which she had opened to effect the escape of Blanche in whose fate Madame Obrasoff had deeply interested her,—the Duchess had provided for their further safety, by obtaining passports from Berlin for three of her foreign servants.

For Blanche this was no longer needed. Many

days since Blanche had disappeared from the place of refuge provided for her, and the fruitless inquiries set on foot left the conviction of the terrible alternative either of her having escaped already or perished with her child.

All that remained therefore for Horace to do was to proceed with Mattheus and Nadeshta to Kalouga, to shew the document enclosed to the Governor, and to come with all speed to St. Petersburg. The Prince on taking the first step to impede or pursue them, the moment he showed himself, would be detained.

Before entering the capital at the last post station, the party would be met by a trusty messenger who would deliver to them the foreign passports, and then changing their route, and assuming the characters of the individuals therein mentioned, they had only to pursue their journey without losing a minute to the frontier.

When Bob Bridle had convinced Alexius how well he understood him by the shrewd questions he put, as to the minutest steps to be followed by his master in all sorts of hypothetical cases, the Lieutenant led him into his sledge, and with a hearty shake of the hand saw him start upon his journey.

The *po-darogne*, or permission to obtain post horses was an extraordinary one, and this together with the distinct promise of a very high *na chai*, or tea-money, induced the driver so to put forth the speed of his six horses that Bob was whisked along at a rate at which he had never yet travelled off an English turnpike-road.

Notwithstanding some occasional misgivings, he hardly doubted that Blanche had succeeded in effecting her escape, and the exhilaration of rapid motion,

the lightness of the air and the success of his mission had put him in high spirits, when as he stopped at a relay to change horses a kibitka drove up, and his quick eye recognized Dimitri, muffled up as he was.

Even the indignation which his recent treachery excited in Bob's breast, was mingled with a vague feeling of apprehension. 'What can he do after all?' said the groom to himself, and yet he proceeded thoughtfully and anxious to the next station.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE cold Siberian wind which has traversed thousands of miles of frozen deserts, howls savagely—the snow covers the monotonous level of the landscape, only relieved by the dark pine forests, looking black by the contrast with its whiteness. It creaks under foot with the intensity of the frost, where the passing sledges have flattened it upon the high-road; and when it has not been pressed down, it lies deep and friable, as drifted by the rude blast which raises it incessantly in eddies.

In this inclement weather, amid this cheerless scene of desolation, a solitary female figure toils along. Cold, weary, footsore and hungry—the mother with her child is struggling to make way before the night should overtake them.

Clad in an old sheepskin, her head enveloped with cloths, and her feet in those ungainly boots of felt, which alone keep out the snow—who would recognise the high-bred Blanche? Yet it is she who presses her infant closer to her bosom, as the unpitying wind blows into her face the sharp crystals of the snow, which glitter in the dying light of the red declining sun. It is Blanche who welcomes the slight flush of fever which over-exertion has produced, because it enables her to impart warmth to her babe.

Ever since the mysterious friends of Blanche had proposed that she should profit by the departure of a traveller, who was willing to take charge of her, (and who was no other than Lesseps) on condition of leaving her child behind her, an indefinable dread had haunted her of being separated from it.

When she found that her fortune was lost through the dishonesty of Vasili Petrovitch, and when she had been alarmed by her contest with the mad wife of the conspirator, her intellect, weakened by her recent illness, rendered her distrustful of all who sought to serve her; and then, yielding to all the feminine impulses of her gentle heart which suffering had not impaired, she snatched up her first-born, and—regardless of her weakness, of the cold, and of the distance; —unheeding the dangers and difficulties of her enterprise; alone, poor, and on foot, she set forth upon a journey of six hundred miles, to seek out and comfort the father of her child.

She had been robbed on the very outset—and perhaps, but for this incident, would hardly have been allowed to proceed so far; for thus deprived of the clothing, which marked her superiority of station, she both attracted less notice, and more readily excited the sympathy of the peasantry, whose charity supplied her with the rude garments in which she appears upon this scene.

The Russian Moujik, notwithstanding all the oppression which brutalises him, is profoundly charitable, at least to his own brethren. He never turns the cold and weary from his hearth, nor the hungry from his door whilst he has a crust to share with them. The very robbers who had plundered her would have let her pass, and perhaps have helped her on her way, had her dress not shewn her to be of a class above

their own. And then, in the spectacle of the mother, worn and weary, wandering onwards with her infant there was that which moved the homely bosoms of the peasantry, and which would in every land have touched all but those pampered in luxury, who have nothing but the cold vaults of a Union, rendered purposely more comfortless—an unwilling charity which necessity extorts—to offer to the wretched.

Perhaps in all countries the prosperous might gather in this respect a lesson from the indigent, a truth set forth by de Berenger, the French Anacreon of the lower orders, who, as it were to the clink of pothouse glasses, has scattered through his coarse and simple songs so much of wit, philosophy and foresight. De Berenger who says:

> Les gueux, les gueux,
> Sont les gens heureux ;
> Ils s'aiment entre eux.
> Vivent les gueux !

Not only had Blanche found a refuge in every Moujik's cottage, but more than once her host had by his counsels protected her from worse robbers than those who stole her more valuable garments—from those who wearing the imperial livery ruthlesly despoil in the imperial name.

She was taught, that if caught without proper papers, to prove her freedom, she would be detained and considered as a slave by the police.

According to the established regulation, every one thus detained is advertised in the public papers; a minute description of the person is ordered to be given, with the intimation that the owner may regain possession of his slave, on proving his title, and paying the expenses of advertisement and keep, just as we see done by stray dogs in England—only that it is a frightful fea-

ture of the administration of the Russian empire, that on minute examination we discover wheel within wheel, fraud operating upon iniquity, and villany again within fraud.

Thus, if unclaimed within a given period, all individuals, who cannot prove their freedom, are adjudged to be sold to cover the expenses of their detention; even if they be runaway slaves, it is almost impossible for the owner to indemnify them, because the description of their person is purposely incorrect. When once detained, they are therefore nearly always sold—the Emperor is the only purchaser, and thus they are added to the twenty millions already in his domain: but then again, here and there, just as they have become the Emperor's property, the police myrmidons who happen to be slave proprietors, whenever one of their own people has died, substitute a runaway for the defunct, and report the death to His Majesty's charge.

The imperial ukase thus first outrages the rights of humanity, apparently in favour of the slave proprietors; then the Emperor's servants cheat his fellow slave-holders to his advantage; and lastly often terminate by robbing him.

Blanche has therefore been taught by her kindly hosts, where and how to avoid those who would have discovered that she was without a passport.

She has now, as she goes toiling on, left many many versts behind her the old city of Novogorod, the republic founded by a handful of her mighty Norman ancestors; but Blanche, the high-born and tenderly nurtured, has forgotten alike her ancestry, her pride, the station she has forfeited, the fortune she has lost —her thoughts are of the present; she longs to reach,

before darkness overtakes her, the roadside village, the wooden roofs of which appear in the distance.

Her solicitude is to arrive in a place where she can find for her child that warmth which she fears will forsake her—to secure the shelter of a roof—and then the village reached, do her thoughts recur to the past? Oh no!—where, if she did, would she gain that courage which supports her feeble frame? no!—then she thinks of Mattheus, and counts the versts she has to traverse.

The place of refuge she has reached is a cottage, resembling all the others in the village. It is built of logs dove-tailed together and the interstices filled with moss. The projecting eaves of the wooden roof, and a slight gallery before the second row of windows, remind you of the Swiss *chalets*. This dwelling is situated in a happy village: its inmates are well to do amongst their fellows.

The sitting-room into which Blanche is received is rendered oppressively hot by the warmth which the huge stack of bricks containing the pech or oven give out. Its walls, originally whitewashed, are very filthy: thick, wooden planks inserted in them, form benches along them, and above are shelves, on which are ranged wooden bowls, and earthen jugs, and vessels bound with birch-bark. Bunches of hackled hemp, and bags of flour, ropes of onions, old clothes, spinning-wheels, axes, and sheepskin couches, are scattered about the apartment.

The family to whom it belongs, own also a new house opposite; but this they do not yet inhabit in the winter, because the smoke of the fires, they say, would blacken it.

Just now there are only the two daughters at

home: they invite her to rest, and warm herself, and then continue, amidst much noisy merriment, a pastime in which they were engaged with other village maidens.—One of them holds a cock, and the others throw down before it grains of corn, and according to the manner in which they are picked up by the bird, do these girls—renewing unconsciously a superstition of the heathen—augur the realization, or non-fulfilment of their amorous, or matrimonial dreams.

At length, however, the *swetlana* is interrupted by the appearance of the elders. Blanche is welcomed again. The father shakes his head when he learns how far she has come—how far she has to go: the wife and daughters pity the mother and her babe; and all wonder awhile at the Niemetz woman. At length they light some fir splinters, incessantly replenished, and sit down to their evening meal, which Blanche is called to share, with the addition of a bowl of milk. After the repast the hearty Moujik hands her a little glass of brandy, flavoured with an infusion of the berries of the mountain-ash; and then, taking off her head-gear, her pelisse, and her felt-boots, she is glad, at their invitation, to lie down upon a sheepskin, spread on the broad plank which serves for a bench; and there, betwixt sleeping and waking, as she suckles her child, and then nurses it to sleep, she listens, without attending, to the merriment and conversation of her hosts.

The next day is the *prasnik*, or holiday. They are all in high good-humour: and at length, at the general request, the patriarchal host, who is a professed story-teller, and more than professionally conscious of his value, after much pressing, agrees to favour them with a tale. He has long proceeded with it when, at

last, the attention of Blanche is attracted to his recital, of which the comprehension is assisted by his active and ingenious pantomime.

"Grigory," said the old Moujik, continuing his tale, "thought, therefore, that he could safely cut across the lake: he had half traversed it, when the moon became clouded," here the narrator, according to the custom of the Russian tale-teller, extinguished the fir splinter, and continued in the dark: "The wind rose; the waters became angry under their sheet of ice, and it began to crack—crack—crack! with a sound like God's thunder, or our lord, the Emperor's cannon. No wonder, for though it split as you crack a pane of glass, every rent went two score *versts* from one side of the lake to the other.

"Then it broke across in another direction, and Grigory felt that he was tossing about on a large raft of ice, a *verst* or two in length; but through all the night, and the next day, it kept dashing crash—crash! against other floating fields: each breaking, and crumbling, and leaping on the other, as the waves pushed them, till piled several deep, or till diminishing to nothing.

"But, with the daylight Grigory saw on the same sheet some twenty wolves—he could not say exactly, for, as often as he tried to reckon them, so often did he count differently. The wolves did not alarm him as much as the wild waters, for they kept afar off on the edge of the field of ice; but, at last, towards nightfall, it had crumbled away, bit by bit, to the size of a *desiatine*. Grigory now began to think that if the waves did not swallow him up, or the wolves fall on him, hunger would force him to attack them;—that he must eat or be eaten;—that he

must be torn limb from limb, or feed on the rank, raw, tainted flesh of a loathsome wolf,—which nothing but a wolf will touch.

"He did not stir, neither did the wolves move:—they only sat howling on the brink; and in this uncertainty he let hour after hour pass, till cold, and fear, and hunger, so overpowered him, that he entirely lost the faculty of motion. The wolves now gathered round him;—they snapped their long, white teeth;—they howled;—their eyeballs glared!"

Here the peasant, taking hold of an ember blew it, so that the glowing spark should be reflected in his own eyes, and imitated the howl of the animal he was describing.

"Grigory saw them put their heads together, as if whispering; and then, whether they thought he could tell no tales, I cannot say; but they spoke boldly out with human voices:—

"'Let us begin!' said one and all. 'Give me the hot liver!' said one. 'Give me the heart:—I will tear it out!' said another. 'Give me the crisp bones to crunch;' cried a third 'or the skull to gnaw, if the hair did not get entangled in one's fangs.' 'Hoo—hoo—hoo!' said an old, grizzled brute, with white bristly hairs about the jaw, and teeth worn down and blunted, 'let me have a draught of the warm blood from his throat, for a full-grown man is tough after the young babe I have eaten. There is nothing—nothing—nothing like a young, human babe from the mother's breast, for the liquorish tooth of a true old wolf.'

"At these words, and by the voice in which he uttered them, Grigory knew him at once to be his neighbour, the old Stephan, whose own grandchild

had been devoured, and thus he discovered that he was one of those accursed men who take the form of savage beasts to prey on the unwary.

"And how did Grigory escape?

"Grigory, who had called on all the saints of paradise, bethought him of Saint Nicholas. He called on his name thrice;—he called on it thrice three times, and he repeated it fervently in nine times nine invocations. At this moment the ice split in two, and he was cast on the shore insensible, where a fisherman picked him up."

"He is a mighty Saint, father:—is St. Nicholas."

"Mighty! I dare say you do not forget the old saying—'If God could die, and were to die, the Emperor would promote St. Nicholas, and make him God Almighty.'"

"But I like better a tale of young princes and of fairy lands," said one of the daughters.

"Well then, listen," replied the father.—"The young Prince Rouslan was crossing a meadow; he was looking up to the sky, and wondering why the modest moon should be so afraid of the sun, and hide itself in the daylight, when a large bird flew rapidly across. Its colours were as beautiful and bright as if you could mix up those of a rainbow with the light of a shooting star; and, as it flew away, it dropped a single feather from its glittering wing, which came slowly, very slowly, down, and fell at the Prince's feet, upon the green grass. He picked it up, and hied him home. The moon that he had wondered about was not out that night: his cottage was quite dark; but what was his surprise, when he brought in the feather, to see it flash a bright blaze of light:—look at it."

Here, to render his story dramatic the old Moujik suddenly blew into a flame some pine chips, which he had been meanwhile preparing to ignite.

"The Prince did not sleep; it was like day in his room, and then he resolved to seek out all over the world the wondrous bird which had dropped the strange feather. He wandered on, on, on, all day, and many following days. He inquired of the fleet winged swallow and of the nimble squirrel and of the humble-bee, if they could tell him where to find the bird;—all they could say was, that it lived far away, where it was difficult and dangerous to seek it. The Prince fell asleep at the foot of a tree, wishing that he only knew where; and in his sleep a fairy appeared to him.

"'Hark!' said the fairy, 'since you are so bold, I will show you the crystal palace in which the enchanted bird reposes; but beware if you do not discover it amongst thousands and thousands of others exactly similar;' and drawing aside the veil, she exhibited to his view myriads of bright glittering halls of light and crystal, more numerous than the stars that sparkle in the Heavens. Look at them!" and throwing open the door, the story-teller, in fresh illustration of his tale, which he thus contrived to tell with great effect upon his auditors, exposed to their view the stars shining out on the dark frosty sky. Here Blanche, overpowered with the fatigues of the day, sank at last to sleep, and thus lost the remainder of his narrative.

"Once in the night she awoke; all the numerous family were lying on their greasy sheepskins, as many of these primitive couches as it would hold being placed upon the top of the very oven. The

heat, the sense of oppression in the heavy and tainted atmosphere, were so unendurable, that she opened the door; but the bleak bitter wind soon reconciled her even to the stifling sensation of the interior of the dwelling.

"When morning came, as she took up her felt boots from the shelf beside her, a dark black patch, marked like a stain, the place where they had lain. It moved; it dispersed; it consisted of an assemblage of hundreds of tarracanes—a sort of nimble brown beetle, which swarm in all Russian houses and cottages, and love to gather in the inclement season under any light object casually laid down, which they literally seem to lift up by the compact mass into which they huddle together."

* * * * *

The day continues boisterous and stormy; it is only by increased rapidity of pace that Blanche can keep up the circulation of the blood; but her strength gives way before this additional exertion; and at this moment she descries another female on the road. She too is a mother. She too carries a child. This is already a bond of sympathy.

"It is very cold, mother," said the stranger; "the wind cuts keenly; we must seek shelter, for we shall not long be able to keep our infants warm. Mine is not many hours old."

"Not many hours?" asked Blanche.

"No," replied the woman. "It first saw the light yesterday."

"Is it yours?"

"Oh yes," said the mother with pride.

"And where are you going? and how can you be thus upon the road?"

"I am going to the village; it was born in the

house of my barón, who has sent me home for the purification, and to nurse it; and I thank God I am hale and hearty; we are not like your blagarodie (nobility) he fits the back to the burthen. Where are you going?"

"Far—very far," said Blanche.

"You look weary," said the woman; "and sound or footsore, this searching wind will oblige us to seek some shelter. The next village along the high road is three hours' tramp; but there is one if we strike off, somewhere through this wood to the left. The wind never lasts with this intense cold. It is well it don't; the very light would freeze. It may go down by sunset; and then the cold without the wind is nothing."

Blanche followed her guide. The village was not distant. It was the prasnik, and the woman led the way into the kabak or pothouse of the place. One of the bath-houses, not licenced establishments like those in the cities, but the joint property of several neighbours, is situated opposite to the kabak, and male and female figures, in a disgusting state of nudity, come out parboiled by the steam into the doorway to cool themselves or roll in the snow—a spectacle now banished from St. Petersburg and Moscow.

The kabak, in a little while, began to fill with customers; but they who lingered longest smoking their pipes were not the most profitable customers. It was strange to see those who had the means of keeping holiday, come in and have as large a measure as they could afford of *polougar*, the coarse corn brandy poured out; this the Moujik drains off like a dram, only panting for breath as he gulps down the potent draught.

Its effect is almost instantaneous: in a few minutes he reels and falls upon the ground, and is carried out a dead weight by the arms and legs, and laid in an outhouse or a stable, where in three or four hours he sleeps off the effect of the poison.

It is true that the Russian Moujik does not always become dead drunk; but that depends on the quantity of the potation which he can afford—much or little, his mode of swallowing it is the same. When it does not suffice to realize his ideas of a jollification, by reducing him to the level of the brute, its effect is to render him singularly loving in his cups: he embraces every one near him; he protests his devotion, and he begs your pardon, or he prostrates himself to kiss your feet, entreating forgiveness of all sorts of imaginary offences.

Perhaps in all countries, a study made of the physiology of drunkenness would lead us to discover a strange difference in causes which operate to make the dram-drinker and the toper. Dram-drinking is the propensity of the wretched; it is a draught of the Lethean waters, an effort to drown care and shun reflection. Those who throng our crowded lanes and alleys, who people our workhouses, are dram-drinkers; but the jovial sot who sips and sips is generally an individual yielding not to misfortune and despair, but seeking and sacrificing to an animal enjoyment.

Is it not with nations as with individuals? Is it not the long oppression under which the Moujik has groaned, which makes him place his enjoyment not in viewing the present through the inspiriting medium of the fumes of liquor, like every other people, but in utter oblivion.

According to its acknowledged operation, intoxica-

tion bringing out the latent tendencies of disposition and the predominant thoughts which occupy the mind, thus renders the Russian kindly and submissive in all the stages of inebriation preceding insensibility; because his natural disposition is gentle, and because an unconscious dread weighs perpetually upon and harasses him.

In the midst of the unceasing din and the coarse rude kindness of these half-besotted boors, Blanche found some refreshment in sleep.

The woman with the new-born child having struck up an acquaintance with one of the carriers, seemed disinclined to proceed. The wind had lulled. Blanche felt her strength somewhat recruited by rest, and she went forth again alone.

The village in which she had sought shelter was not situated directly on the high road; and whilst attempting to regain it she lost her way. On endeavouring to retrace her steps, she became at length quite bewildered; and, after wandering for many hours, the sudden night of winter overtook her still upon the road.

The faint light of a few stars and the refraction of the snow's whiteness, alone rendered discernible the unfrequented track she was pursuing. Although the wind had subsided, the frost was—as it had been for several days—exceedingly bitter. Blanche, in the frozen solitude she was traversing, knew not when or where she should find a place of refuge, or even whether she was not going from it.

But her maternal fears gave strength to her weary limbs, and she redoubled her pace as she pressed her infant more closely to her bosom. At

length, she thought she could discern some dusky object moving behind and then before her, and then several similar to it:—they were wolves—the faint starlight in certain positions lit up their glaring eyeballs; and at length, as they drew nearer, turning round and round her, she could hear their deep growl; for though the wolves make the Russian forests resound with their howling, it is only in the autumn: in the winter season, when hunger pinches, they are never heard to howl.

First three or four, and then eight, ten, and twelve, were distinctly visible; they followed; they preceded; they moved noiselessly along upon the snow on each side of her. She was, with her tender infant, in the middle of a pack of wolves! With her blood curdling —with an agony of terror at her heart—she fled along; but her very flight emboldened the cowardly and ferocious animals, who, only when pressed by hunger and in numbers, ever venture to attack a human being; and then nearly always a woman or a child, or one who flies before them.

At this moment, Blanche descried an abandoned hut—roofless, windowless, and doorless—and in this inhospitable tenement, her terror prompted her to seek shelter.

For a time her purpose was answered; for the wolves were shy of approaching anything resembling a human habitation; but, by degrees, as hunger griped them, they gained confidence, and every now and then a fierce head intruded through the doorway, with glaring eyes, and long sharp fangs, and blood-red jaws, distilling the white saliva, as the tongue was expectantly passed over them.

There was an old grizzled wolf—just such a one as

the peasant had described in his improvisation—bolder, or more ferocious, or more hungry than the rest; and, as Blanche, bewildered by her awful situation, recalled to memory the narration of the preceding night, it acted so powerfully on her imagination, that she fancied she could hear it speak in human accents and call out for her infant.

The old wolf had crossed the threshold; perhaps in another instant he would have been at her throat; but the mother was beforehand with him; for with a wild outcry she sprang forward, shrieking frantically:

"Away! away! I have struggled with the mad woman, and I have baffled her! I will save my babe!"

Her assailant made a bound backwards; and, stretching her arms across the doorway, she seemed to defy the pack which had slunk back, and glared with hungry eyes upon her from a distance as the cries of her child tempted them from within the ruined hut; for even famine-stricken wolves are overawed by a fearless human form, which they must attack in front.

Nevertheless, the frost would soon have done the work of these ravenous besiegers, when the tinkling of bells was heard:—it was a sledge approaching—she was saved!

CHAPTER XX

NOTWITHSTANDING all the efforts made by Bob Bridle to urge on his driver, as they approached the town of —— the kibitka in which Dimitri was seated shot ahead, and at last vanished from sight on the straight and level road before him.

When Bob stopped at the post-house, the post-master and six or eight other persons were standing at the door, and appeared to be awaiting his arrival with intense curiosity, for they had not yet unharnessed the horses, which stood smoking in the other kibitka.

As Bob alighted they stepped on one side with an alacrity which he mistook for deference. When he peremptorily demanded horses the post-master only stared at him.

"Wait 'till I shew you the ticket, my boys!" says Bob producing his pa-dorogne, which—being a special one—had all along the road procured immediate attention and respect.

The post-master took it with some trepidation, and perused it with curiosity.

"It contains no description of the person!" he observed to his neighbour, without answering the tra-

veller, and then the bystanders began to talk among themselves.

Bob Bridle, although in a general way he plumed himself on neither drinking nor swearing, rapped out a terrible Russian oath, whereat those at whom he swore backed a pace or two; but before it had time to produce the salutary effect which he expected from it, a police officer entered, accompanied by several stout assistants and tapped him on the shoulder.

"What!" said Bob, "you dare not detain me, bearing as I do a special pa-dorogne."

"You must follow me to the governor's," replied the official; and Bob, being placed in a sledge, between two sturdy police-soldiers, was whisked off to the residence of that functionary.

After not more than an hour's delay, he was led into the presence of the potentate.

The governor, an elderly man, sickly and hypochondriac, was reclining on the sofa on which he had spent the night. The chief of the police of his government, his aide-de-camp, his physician, and his secretary, together with several attendants, were present.

His bare feet were inserted into Turkish slippers, and his robe de chambre, lined with costly sable, displayed a very dirty coloured shirt, for weeks unchanged beneath it—they were the only two garments he wore; but his full uniform was displayed on a chair beside him—and every one else, even at this early hour was stiffly buckled up, in all the full rigidity of regulation.

None but the highest authority in a place dares dispense with the exact costume of office, and negligence in this particular is therefore a sign of superiority;—a rule, however, to which the Emperors have long offered

a remarkable exception, for a Russian Emperor never quits his uniform.

The words of Scripture, "Naked I came from my mother earth, and naked shall I return to it," do not apply to him; for, though he may come into the world naked, he is consigned to the dust in his martial attire.

"The uniform," says a Sclavonic writer bitterly, "is the skin of the *Knoutopotent* Tsar! he is reared, lives, dies, and rots in it."

His physician was a Greek—one of those corrupt and intriguing Greeks of the Fanar, whom their free Moreote brethren have been obliged to exclude from the fraternity of citizenship, which they had at first extended to them. The powerful intellect of his people—undirected in this individual by self-respect, or the elevation of a single feeling—would have enabled him easily to attain a skill in his profession, but which he found easier to counterfeit;—and it still shone forth in the ascendency which the empiric had obtained over those to whom he appeared to cringe.

Bob's eye did not catch the figure of Dimitri till he heard him answer, "That is he, your Excellency," and Dimitri coming up to Bob threw his arms round his neck and embraced him tenderly.

The feelings of the groom were so grievously outraged by this salutation, that his temper for an instant forsook him, and he dealt Dimitri a blow which made him stagger.

"God bless us," said the governor starting, "he will do us a mischief!"

But the police soldiers instantly and dexterously pinioned the poor groom, who, deeply regretting that he had been aggravated into this unpropitious violence,

determined to repair it as far as possible by the calmness of his demeanour.

"To think," said Dimitri, in whose eyes notwithstanding his hypocrisy there stood real tears, "to think that he should have struck *me*, who love him as a brother!"

"Hush," said the governor, "I will interrogate him myself. Who are you, fellow?"

"My name is Bob Bridle:—I am servant to the Count de Montressan."

"What countryman?"

"An Englishman."

"Where do you come from?"

"St. Petersburg."

"Where are you going to?"

"To my master at Kalouga."

"What to do?"

"To carry him some important documents."

"Why did you strike that man?"

"He is a rogue: he provoked me to it. I forgot myself. I beg your Excellency's pardon.

The governor looked at the physician—the physician shook his head, and said in an under-tone, "the eye is wild—mad—mad as a March hare."

"I don't see that," said the governor, "his replies are very sensible"—and then, turning to Dimitri, he said sternly, "beware, fellow; if thou art deceiving us."

"My Lord!" said Dimitri, "I must be as mad as this unfortunate creature to dare attempt it: but his madness is only occasional and full of method. His master, as I have the honour of telling your Excellency, is the intimate friend of my own, and at this moment visiting him. This poor fellow—for whom the

Count has a true regard—was taken with one of his occasional fits and he has knocked down his cousin and fellow-servant, and escaped, making use of his pa-dorogne and carrying off some important documents, which it is to be feared he may destroy."

"This is a singular case," said the governor to his secretary, "I know the Prince Isaakoff well; do all the documents bear out his statement?"

"Here they are, your Excellency," replied the secretary: "the Englishman is bearer of his own passport, and of a special pa-dorogne—the surname is the same, but the christian names do not agree: one is Bob, and the other Robert."

"Just so;" observed Dimitri, glibly, "his name is Bob, and his cousin's Robert."

"The Englishman is the bearer of a sealed packet, addressed to Count Horace de Montressan, at the village of Bialoe Darevnia, in the government of Kalouga, at the house of the Prince Ivan Isaakoff. The other bears a pass in his own name, declaring him to be in the service of the Prince Isaakoff, and a special pa-dorogne also: but both containing a description of his person, which strictly tallies."

"Why did not the cousin start in pursuit of him?"

"He is too severely injured, your Excellency," replied Dimitri, with effrontery.

"Hold him very tight!" said the governor aloud; and then, seeing the impassibility of Bob's countenance, he added, partly perhaps to contradict his doctor; "and yet I do not see a sign of madness."

"If your Excellency's unprofessional eyes could detect every bodily and mental ailment, where would be the use of a physician?"

" I can assure your Excellency," said Dimitri, " that, with all his quiet manner, his outbreaks are both very strange and very terrible. I do not know whether the marks remain; but I remember that he once had his body tattooed."

" Tattooed !" exclaimed the governor, " that would be something like a proof, and one easily produced."

" Only turn up his cuffs," suggested Dimitri. It was done, and a number of arabesques, pricked in with gunpowder, and recording various names, appeared in view.

" Let us see further," exclaimed the governor, curiously taking up his eye-glass; as Bob's arm was laid bare.

" What do you call that, my friend?"

" That," said Bob, a little disconcerted, " is a foolish pedigree."

" And those letters ?—what do those particular letters mean ?"

" Those letters mean," replied Bob, " that Semiramis was got by Voltaire out of the Duchess of Marlborough."

" That will do," said the governor, quietly putting down his glass. " I have done with him. You may remove him, doctor. You had better try upon this patient your cure by friction."

" I will," said the triumphant physician, " when he has been duly bled, blistered, and dieted."

CHAPTER XXI.

"It is very strange," said Horace, breathless with mingled joy and apprehension as he perused a letter which he held in his hand. "I learn by this that Bridle left St. Petersburg the night preceding the day on which this was written. He did not take the steps I had pointed out, in the event of failing in his mission; therefore he must have succeeded; but then, having left twelve hours at least before this letter, what has detained him?"

As the Count spoke, the bells of a team of horses and the last shouts of the driver as he turned his sledge into the yard were audible.

"There he is!" said Horace, Nadeshta, and Matthews with one accord.

But, instead of Bob Bridle, they were met in the corridor by the Prince Isaakoff. "How goes it, my friend—my worthy friend?" said the Prince with exquisite urbanity, throwing off his bear-skin shube, and without taking notice of the others, extending to the Count his hand, which was coldly refused.

"What," continued Isaakoff, allowing some irony of manner now to pervade his words,—"what? so much ceremony amongst friends? This is a cool reception when one has travelled fast and far to bear

you pleasing intelligence. I knew that you, Count Horace, had a powerful friend; but I was not aware that my own people were honoured by such protection. In twenty minutes, my worthy guest—or I suppose I must say my guests now—I will join you in the library."

There was a bitterness about the Prince's manner, as, pronouncing the last words, he turned with mock deference towards Mattheus and Nadeshta, which led Horace to infer that the steps he had taken had not proved fruitless, particularly when coupled with the negative evidence afforded by the letter which he had just received.

The Prince, as he had promised, was not more than twenty minutes before he joined them; and, during this time, they waited full of uncertainty, which, with Horace and Nadeshta lightened into sanguine hope, and with Mattheus, darkened into anxious disbelief.

When Isaakoff joined them, he closed the doors of all the apartments; for the library was situated at the extremity of a long suite of rooms. He smiled benignantly as he threw himself into an arm-chair, and begged the Count and the two slaves to be seated.

Horace felt himself in a position so strange, so widely different from anything he had ever heard of or imagined, that he was utterly at a loss what line of conduct to pursue, and in this perplexity seated himself in silence.

So deeply interested was he in the fate of Nadeshta and her brother, so curious to hear the explanation of the words which the Prince had let drop, that in this feeling merged all thought of resenting the insult which the overstrained politeness of his host's manner

in reality conveyed, after what had passed between them.

"In the first place," said the Prince, taking out the parcel, which had been confided to Bob Bridle, "though I think you have not used me well in withholding from me your confidence in this little matter, here, Count Horace, allow me to give into your hands these documents. Although intended as a surprise to me, they cannot fail to give you pleasure:—read."

The Count tore open the envelope, and discovered several letters and papers.

"Mattheus," said he, "your wife has escaped with her child."

"Thank God," exclaimed Mattheus, clasping his hands together in a transport of delight, and lifting up his eyes in fervent thanksgiving; but, an instant after, there shot athwart his features a momentary expression like that to which a sudden twinge of pain gives rise. His expiation had availed; his sacrifice had been accepted; but she had left him alone—for ever—without a word of kindness or forgiveness.

The Count continued to read on with an astonishment which he could not conceal,—an astonishment occasioned less by the contents of the documents he was perusing, than by the unaccountable fact of their having come into the possession of the Prince, and then been delivered, as we have just seen, into his own hands by him. For an instant the thought flashed across him that they might be counterfeited; but the handwriting of a letter which he recognised, and the signature of the Grand Master, forbade him to entertain this idea.

"Prince Isaakoff," he said at length, "I imagine, by the assurance of your manner, that you are ignorant

of the contents of the parcel you have so kindly remitted to me;" and then he checked himself, reflecting that perhaps his wisest course would be to proceed instantly to Kalouga, to obtain assistance from the governor.

"Pardon me," replied the Prince blandly. "I am acquainted with it, word for word. Do not harbour the injurious idea that your seal has been tampered with. I have had exact copies transmitted to me through the kindness of a friend.

"The one is an order to the governor of Kalouga, signed by Benkendorf, commanding him to afford you every assistance in proceeding to St. Petersburg, with two of my slaves, whose names are left blank, empowering you to remove them forcibly, if requisite, which I do not think it will be,"—here the Prince smiled at Nadeshta and Mattvei—"and declaring that on no account and under no pretence whatever are you to be impeded or delayed. The other instructs the same personage to arrest, confine, and keep incommunicate your humble servant, the Prince Ivan Isaakoff, until further notice, which, I think, will not reach him till such time as Count Horace has repaid his hospitality by carrying two of his slaves beyond the frontier.

"This personal detention is really the unkindest cut of all—unkind, unmerited, unfeeling, inconsiderate!" said the Prince, affecting to whimper: "though it is bad enough to rob me of Nadeshta and her brother—when I consider that the Moscow milliner would have wiped out the score the Italian singer ran me up, to be allowed the privilege of introducing Nadeshta into life—when I look at her Greek profile, and consider what a classically voluptuous Lais the future Countess of Montressan would have made;—

when my eyes dwell on the Herculean proportions of her brother, and I reflect what a magnificent caryatide he would make, with that gigantic torso bowed, the muscles of those powerful arms brought into play, beneath a basket of ore in a Siberian mine."

"Hark!" said Horace, "you may proceed, if you will, with this ill-timed pleasantry; but do you know that I am fully aware of the power of the Grand Master's signature? Do you know that, at the same time these papers were dispatched, a private order was transmitted to the governor of Kalouga? Do you know that I am armed—that with a pistol in one hand and this signature in the other, I am going now to order out a sledge to proceed with Nadeshta and her brother straight to the city? and woe to those who attempt to impede me!"

"If that signature be Count Benkendorf's," said Mattheus, "the Prince will command in vain. The Lord's will is powerful, but only till any one speaks in the Emperor's name. Johann himself dares not detain you."

"Well," replied the Prince calmly, "though now his eye lit up with that infernal expression that sometimes came to waken its cold death-like impassibility, "well, this is a pleasingly devised surprise to repay my hospitality, and I admit to you that nothing can resist the Grand Master's positive order; nothing can be more potent than his signature; there is nothing can destroy or weaken its efficacity, excepting his own signature, and here I hold it (the Prince drew a paper from his pocket) it is dated, as you see, the 11th, a day after yours. It provides, in the first place, that the two slaves in question shall only be sent on to St. Petersburg in the event of their Baron, —the Prince Ivan Isaakoff—thereunto consenting; and

in the next, that if he decline so doing, the governor shall take down the accusation of Count Horace against the Prince; and, with regard to the slaves, if its nature do not affect the Imperial interests, conform to the established law—which law I need not tell you is, that no slave can give evidence against his master. The governor is further directed only to detain the Prince in custody in the event of the Count de Montressan's charge being of sufficient gravity to demand this step; and, in that case, he is instructed not to allow the accuser to proceed, till the affair is thoroughly sifted. This little slip of paper has cost me fifty thousand roubles; but it is fair and perfectly satisfactory—if not satisfactory to all parties," said the Prince. "Surprise for surprise."

A dead silence followed this overwhelming blow. The papers fell from the powerless hand of Horace. He felt faint, and gasped for breath.

"It *is* tantalizing," continued the Prince, with a diabolical smile, "to think that, but for this little piece of paper, nothing could have prevented you all escaping—Horace with his Nadeshta, Nadeshta with her Horace, and Mattvei to join his foreign wife—to think that, beyond all doubt, some confederate is waiting upon the road to favour your flight—to think that your messenger started four-and-twenty hours before it was possible to gain the car of the Grand Duke or to obtain from the Grand Master this pleasing modification—to think that my Dimitri got your English groom detained by the most laughable stratagem, and to enjoy the reflection that, even at this moment if you only stood with those papers which you treat so negligently in the governor's house at Kalouga, if it were not for these few lines

—which would be there as soon as you could—there would be nothing to impede you."

"Look!" said Horace, drawing forth his pistols, "I told you I was armed. Take one. Get up, stand at ten paces, or I will shoot you like a dog!"

"Oh no!" said the Prince, reaching the bell, "I will not meddle with your pistol. You dare not murder me."

"You have not yet wiped out the blow I gave you," said Horace hoarsely.

"You have not paid me yet," replied the Prince, sarcastically.

"Horace," said Nadeshta, seizing the arm of the Count, whose eyes flashed fire, "Horace! dear Horace, do no murder;" and then she added with a sudden inspiration, "Horace! Mattheus! he is alone, why not seize him, bind him, destroy that document, and fly?"

With the speed of thought, Horace and Mattheus flew at the Prince and overpowered him, but not before he had time to utter one faint cry and ring the bell.

At this sound Dimitri, who, without their knowledge, was in the adjoining room, entered the apartment. When he saw the Prince grasped in the powerful arms of Mattheus, who placed one hand on his mouth as Horace quitted hold of his throat, he advanced a few paces to his rescue, and then turned about to fly for succour; but Nadeshta had locked the door behind him, and with flashing eye and dilating nostril, and lips that without utterance spoke her determination, presented at his head one of the Count's pistols. She looked the image of the Judith in the beautiful French engraving, where Judith, rather Arabian than Hebrew in character and outline, draws the sword of the sleeping Assyrian.

Count Horace, having torn a curtain to shreds, proceeded to bind and gag the Prince securely, and then performed the same operation by Dimitri, who, disinclined to fire-arms, and fascinated by the pistol on which his eyes were riveted, offered no resistance.

All this had taken place without a word being spoken.

"Now," said Count Horace, "let us take counsel how to act; with a little good fortune we may yet be saved; for he himself has pointed out the way."

The result of this deliberation was the conviction, that, if they could so contrive that the Prince should not for some hours be discovered by his domestics, there were only two circumstances which could prevent their escaping from the empire; the first, if the Prince had not spoken truly in saying, that no counter order had yet reached the governor ofKalouga; the second, in case the Duchess of Lowicz—alarmed by the Grand Duke's angrily rescinding the order which had been extorted from him—should have neglected to prepare, or have failed to provide for their flight from St Petersburg;—and yet, once in the capital, even there all was not hopeless.

"See!" said Mattheus, addressing the Prince, who could hear though he could not speak, "see! how, by a singular retribution, the very cruelty which thou didst practise, Ivan Ivanovitch, furnishes, from its minutest details, weapons wherewith to baffle thee. Cruel son of a generous father! thou didst think to break my heart by imposing on me menial offices: and so it happens now, that when I give orders to thy people not to disturb thee till morning, it will excite no suspicion or surprise."

It was then agreed that, having given these instructions, and brought in tea, Mattheus should order, in his master's name, a sledge to be harnessed with the fleetest horses, to convey the Count immediately to the city. This sledge Mattheus was to drive himself. Nadeshta, stealing out, was to meet them where the cross-road joins the highway.

The two captives being then secured afresh, so as to render the loosening their bonds impossible without assistance, and all necessary precautions being taken, they prepared to leave him.

"Prince Isaakoff!" said Nadeshta, "she, whom unoffending thou wouldst have given over to shame and ruin, bids thee farewell; she does not curse thee for what thou didst intend to her; but she tells thee in parting, that the prayers of thy forty thousand slaves, when they rise up like the dew of earth to Heaven, accumulate there into one stupendous curse, which, like the thunder-cloud, will burst upon thy head!"

"Ivan Ivanovitch!" said Mattheus, "he whom thou hast so provoked, aggrieved, and persecuted, wishes thee farewell for ever; he whom thou didst doom to play the Caryatide, wishes, for thy departed father's sake, that thou mayest fare better than thou deservest!"

"Ivan Ivanovitch, Prince Isaakoff!" said Count Horace, "foul blot on the face of humanity!—vile stain to the order which your name *disgraces*, I bid you farewell! But I, leave you three mementoes of the past: one is, the recollection of the blow unavenged wherewith I smote your cheek; the other is this document, which I place upon your very bosom, although you cannot use it till too late; the third, is this little half of an ivory loaded die, wherewith I redeem

the gaming score you hold against me; the other half I keep as my quittance and the proof of your infamy to the world at large. Farewell!"

The Prince made a violent effort in his bonds; and then, convinced of its futility, he was motionless, closing the thin, blue tinted lids over his eyes, whose lead-like orbs seemed kindling with a spark of baffled, self-consuming hatred.

They locked all the massive double doors of the whole suite of rooms, taking with them the keys; and then, about half an hour afterwards, Mattheus drove out the Count, and took up Nadeshta at the cross-road.

CHAPTER XXII.

BUT, just as Nadeshta was seated in the sledge, just as her brother was about to give the rein to the snorting horses, a man stepped forward from the road-side, and seized them by the head with a vehement oath.

It was the old Starost.

"Back!—back!" he said; and drawing his axe from his girdle, prepared to cut the traces.

"What art thou doing?" said Nadeshta. "Desist! It is I."

"I know thee well," replied the old man, doggedly. "Woman of the beauteous brow, of the bold heart, of the strong arm and head! Slave, who wouldst leave behind thy fellow-slaves, I have thwarted thee once. *I* gave information to the Prince of the Count's design when he sent his servant to St. Petersburg!"

"What!—thou didst betray us! Thou art mad!" said Mattheus, jumping out.

"Father!" said Nadeshta, "thou wouldst not surely injure us? Loose thy hold."

"No, no!" replied the Starost, "thou passest not onward. I have a kind of love for thee whilst here; but, like the damned, I will not suffer alone!"

"Stand back, old man!" said Horace, "or I will send a ball through your mad brain!"

"Do!—it will rouse all the domestics!" replied the Starost, still endeavouring to cut the traces, which now hanging loose, could not easily be severed by a blow.

"Father, let go!" said Mattheus, "or be your blood on your own head!"

"I can defend it," replied the old man, brandishing his axe fiercely; but Mattheus closed with him. The struggle was violent, but brief: the murderous weapon was wrenched from the Starost's hand; and his young and powerful assailant struck him with the blunt side a blow upon the skull, which felled him like an ox.

"You have not killed him, brother!" said Nadeshta.

"I do not know," replied Mattheus; "let us drive on—not over him!"

Horace, who had gathered up the reins when Mattheus alighted, now drove on at a pace so terrific, that no farther allusion could be made to this accident. Before reaching Kalouga, one horse dropped dead; it was detached; and still the sledge flew on with the same wild speed.

Their reception by the governor of Kalouga was of such vital importance, they were drawing so near to the crisis of their fate, that not a syllable passed their lips. The city was reached, and Mattheus, who had re-assumed the reins, drove to the governor's residence, where the Count alighted—Blanche and her brother awaiting in an agony of suspense without.

After nearly half an hour's delay, Horace rejoined them. "It is all right, let us proceed"—but the

jaded horses after this half hour's inaction had grown so stiff that they could no longer move. A messenger had however been dispatched to the post-house for a fresh team, which soon arrived, and they resumed their journey full of hope.

Post after post, hour after hour, they flew along; threats and gold gave them speed, and the thought that perhaps their safety depended upon the start of a few hours which they had gained; and that happiness, and love, and freedom were to crown their exertions, inspired them not only with strength to sustain the fatigues of their rapid flight, but made them feel impatient even at all unavoidable delay.

Two days and two nights they had been incessantly upon the road, when towards sunset they were driving through a forest. The frost had caused them to muffle themselves so closely in their furs as to leave only the eyes, nose, and mouth exposed; the very breath froze in icicles upon the soft sable hair of their cloaks and upon the long beard of the post driver.

The driver, kept in awe by the special pa-dorogne which Horace had obtained from the governor, and stimulated alike by the high recompence offered and by his wish to get out of the piercing cold, was urging on his horses with utter disregard to the interests of his master, when they dashed rapidly past some human being seated by the road side.

"Stop! stop! stop!" said Nadeshta, "that poor wayfarer will perish."

"Dear Nadeshta! we may all perish if we lose a single hour," said Horace.

"Alas!" said Mattheus "the world is full of miseries, but we have no time now to look to this unfortunate. Drive on."

"No, stop," said Nadeshta, "I will not go on: it is a woman—the poor creature will perish in this bitter frost, if she sits there only for a few minutes longer—perhaps she is already frozen."

Mattheus stepped out and approached the figure, whose sex, thus huddled together and muffled in its sheepskin was not at first discernible, although on closer examination he discovered that it was a woman already half stupified by the cold.

"Come! come! *matushka*," (mother) said he in Russ.

She did not answer, though she moved.

"Come," continued Mattheus, endeavouring to raise her, when to his utter amazement, she exclaimed in English:

"No, not my child—you shall not take my child; the mad woman has relinquished her hold, and the wolf shrunk back."

"Good God!" said Mattheus, drawing aside the garment which covered her head, and embracing his wife as he recognised her. "Good God! my Blanche, is it you?"

"Mattheus! Mattheus! my own Mattheus!" said Blanche, "Oh! warm our babe, it is so cold"—and then, overpowered by hunger, weakness and emotion, she sank insensible. By this time Horace and Nadeshta were by her side.

"My child—my child! on whom its father's eyes have never yet lighted," said Mattheus, and from the mother's bosom he drew forth his first-born, to gaze upon it with a father's pride: but alas, life had been long—perhaps many days—extinct; the little thing was stiff, and stark, and cold; its once tender limbs felt stony as the ice into which its young blood was cur-

dled; and its blue and tiny lips seemed frozen into a livid smile. The last, the very last offshoot of the once illustrious house of Mortimer had perished of cold and misery, by the road side, for want of a shelter in which to lay its houseless head.

* * * * *

"I always told you so," said Mattheus, whose wife had been lifted into the sledge; "thus the curse works on our predestined race! How dared I ever hope the contrary—worm as I was—to think that the immutable decrees of fate should bend to my mean personality! Oh no, we cannot shun the destiny pre-ordained tens of centuries back. Nadeshta, may'st thou escape the doom which I perpetuate; and as for *her* she is not of our blood. I have just seen thee kissing her cold cheek with the affection of a sister; and so, Nadeshta, remembering how in thy thoughts thou hast wronged this noble woman—thou wilt be kind to her and foster her: let me hear thee say thou wilt before we part."

"Before we part!" replied Nadeshta—"you are dreaming, brother."

"A dream that knows no waking then: our fates like two diverging lines now clearly separate, never to meet again except in Heaven. Our passport is but for three: now that Blanche is with us, I should make a fourth. I know the jealous vigilance of the authorities. I know too well that to accompany you would bring detection and heap ruin on you all. God bless you, my fond sister—God bless you, noble brother. God bless you, my poor Blanche. Dead as my last words fall on your unconscious ear; insensible as are your cold lips to my kisses — God give you consolation and

forgetfulness! Blanche, Nadeshta, Horace! fare you well!"

"This cannot be," said Horace, "you cannot quit us thus:—we cannot leave you to fall afresh into your tyrant's hands."

"No," said Mattheus, "that trial will be spared me now. I shall take to the wild woods. I shall mate with the fox, the wolf, and the bear. I shall trust to the mercies of the elements: I shall bear with me my child till the spring comes, and I will bury it then far in the wilderness, for now the wolves would dig it up. The cruel frost which has nipped it in the bud will keep it from decay for me to gaze upon, and I will bury it when flowers are springing. So once more, fare you well!"

And so saying, Mattheus waved his hand, and, plunging into the thicket with his first-born, vanished amid the low serried branches of the white fir.

"Oh my brother! my brother, he shall not go alone!" said Nadeshta, with an effort to follow him; but Horace held her firmly, imploring, intreating, and endeavouring to bring her back to reason; till in fact it became so obvious that any attempt to follow him in the boundless forest could only lead to their own destruction without availing him, that the Count was at last enabled to proceed with the two women:—the one in a state of distraction, the other of insensibility.

Two months, to the very day, after this harrowing scene, Nadeshta, who had been already married in

England, to avoid the interminable formalities of the Napoleon code—which renders marriage more difficult than divorce—was again united at his own desire to the Count de Montressan in the old chapel of his ancestral manor-house in Britanny; and, the ceremony over, husband and wife went to watch by the bed-side of the convalescent Blanche.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NEARLY two years have elapsed since the escape of Blanche and Nadeshta from the power of the Prince.

Already all his estates have been sold excepting those in the government of Kalouga, for he has preferred selling his slaves and property outright to pledging them to the crown, fully aware that in that case they are equally lost, being, from one cause or other, scarcely ever redeemed.

By a trait which would appear strange and anomalous in other nations, but which is characteristic enough of the higher order of Russians, the Prince Isaakoff urged by an irresistible impulse—with a cool head and with his eyes open—has plunged into a course of boundless and ruinous extravagance. Profuse without generosity, and magnificent without dignity, lavishing millions whilst still mean in trifles; he clearly foresaw and yet by a strange fascination could not shun this reckless dissipation of his once colossal fortune. Like those gamesters, who, aware of all the chances in favour of the tables, of the advantages of its superior capital, and without any illusive confidence in their own luck, are still fascinated to play without a hope of eventual success.

Now, although the estate of the Bialoe-Darevnia

which he still possessed was unmortgaged, his necessities had caused him long since to neglect all prudence in extracting from it all that could momentarily be squeezed out of his peasantry to supply the exigencies of the moment; and as a most fitting instrument for this purpose he still retained Johann Sauer in his employment. As the misanthropic old Starost had prophesied from his keen observation alike of men and of the rotation of the seasons, the harvest failed, just when everything was shaven closely from the surface of the land, reducing the estate to the condition of one or two which happened to adjoin it.

Some hundred thousand slaves, amongst them the ten thousand of the Bialoe Darevnia, were famine-stricken: the other owners had already mortgaged them, and like Isaakoff (who still resolutely refused to do so,) were unwilling or unable to raise any immediate fund for their relief. The winter passed, but with the spring disease and hunger began to decimate and render desperate this unhappy population.

A wretched crowd battled eagerly for the garbage thrown out from the dwelling of the sleek Johann Sauer, notwithstanding all the dread which his now unbridled rapacity and severity inspired. His comfortable stacks of corn rose round the farm-yard, his cattle lowed, his poultry cackled within it; he was rich and well to do in the world, and he had established on the estate itself, a manufactory for the fabrication of beet-root sugar.

Bob Bridle, left behind by Count Horace, had sought out the Prince, a step which will be at once accounted for by the fact that the grey horse Lucifer had been tacitly confiscated by the latter, and, as he was

found utterly unmanageable, the services of Bob had been eagerly secured: he had trained him, and ridden him, and won with him at Moscow, and he was now settled with him for the winter in the village of Bialoe-Darevnia.

Nothing could exceed the affection which had grown up betwixt the fiery stallion and his groom. The loose box which Lucifer inhabited formed an anteroom to Bob's own apartment. The walls were whitewashed, and it was neatly paved, cleanly swept, and kept warm by the same stove as Bob's own chamber, indeed, it only differed from it in being boarded, furnished with a bed and chest of drawers, and ornamented with a print of the last winner of the Derby before Bob had quitted the turf, mounted by the jockey who had ridden him—a work of art which, from the care he took of it, the Russians mistook for the image of his patron saint.

When a distinction is made between the apartments of Bob and his horse, it must be explained that it existed more in form than in reality; for, long before daylight in the winter, Lucifer used to make his way into the groom's bed-chamber, sometimes playfully lifting the bed-clothes with his teeth, and sometimes touching his cheek with his black muzzle till he had awakened him; and then on the other hand Bob spent a large portion of his leisure in the horse's stall, seated on a barrel placed next the stove to keep the water thawed, and which he had painted pea-green, tastily picking out the hoops with white. Here he either polished the bits, or stirrup irons, or perused his bible, or peered with avidity into the racing calendar, of which he had added a few volumes to his library.

The upper half of the stable door, on which Lucifer's racing plates had been nailed, was open; he had been properly attended to, and, this operation performed, Bob had prepared his own breakfast consisting of tea and toast. Using the green cask as a table, he had spread on it a snow-white napkin and drawn a chair beside it. The grey horse's head intruded inquiringly over his shoulder as the groom raised to his mouth the tea, which he had poured out into a saucer.

"Now then!" said Bob, "now then, Lucy! do let other folks have their breakfast, you've had yourn. I'll put that ere head into a bag if you don't take it away; don't you see that the sugar basin is covered, and you can't get it into the milkpot, though I'm agreeable to admit that it *is* a small head, and as well set on as a horse's need be."

Lucifer, thus spoken to, whinnied an answer, rubbing his muzzle gently against Bob's cheek, and then smelling the plate of toast.

"Now then! do you want to put your nose too near the Sammy what's-o-name," continued Bob, alluding to the *Samovar*, or tea-urn, "and spill the tea over my leathers as you did yesterday? No, don't meddle with that plate, I never heared of a horse being cocked up with such dainties as buttered toast 'specially when he gets the best of oats, beans, and, carrots, and so many poor creatures of Christians, which they calls theirselves, is glad to pick the leavins off the dunghill. Come, let me have my breakfast, you always gets your feed, full measured and carefully sifted, and I havn't had a mornin's belly-full these three weeks."

And it was true that, every morning, the hungry children who looked in wistfully had excited

such pity in Bob's breast that he divided the best part of his breakfast between them, always protesting that "he wished the young shavers would go and stare Johann out of his appetite instead of him," and inquiring whether they thought he was to feed the whole village and have his own breakfast out of that ere plate of toast?

"It's a blessin," continued Bob, looking at Lucifer to whom the best part of his conversation was generally addressed, "it's a blessin' that they havn't thought of me this morning, though," he added after a moment's reflection, "poor things, perhaps some on 'em is laid by the heels with hunger," and so saying he compassionately laid aside on a shelf all the remainder of his loaf.

Now the reason why no one had come that morning to Bob Bridle's door was, that it was a day of terror in the village. During the night a daring band of desperadoes, ravenous with hunger, not contented, as Johann said, with the refuse of the beet-root (after the sugar had been extracted from it) which he regularly distributed amongst them, had actually dug into the deep pit in which the roots were stored to keep them from the frost. When the tardy daylight dawned, Johann discovered the ground not only strewed with the remains of roots on which the famished wretches had assuaged their appetite, but many tons deposited in the same place frost-bitten and destroyed.

His rage knew no bounds. As for his wife, she even allowed this event to derange the immutable course of her household economy. The making up the ley for the great wash was postponed, and the bleeding of the pigs was deferred, for this thrifty manager, of whom Bob observed, "that she would

squecze milk out of a flint, and pick the kernel out of a paving-stone"—had accustomed these hapless animals to the operation every ten days for a month or two preceding their being converted into pork; thus drawing the blood regularly as a cow is milked to make black puddings, a proceeding which had the further advantage of rendering the swine dropsical, in which condition they were slaughtered, frozen, and sent to market, where they sold by weight.

All the efforts of Johann to discover the guilty parties failed. There was no indication by which to trace them, excepting a single distinct footprint on the snow, but this footprint was of very ordinary dimensions, so that more than eighty adult males were discovered in the manor village of whose tread it might alike have been the impress.

"You will keep them apart," said Johann to the Starost, "for to-morrow I expect both my brother Dietrich and the Captain Ispravnick. You are right, you are always right, Batushka (father), I am too lenient with them. An example must be made, or we shall have them in open rebellion."

The old Starost grinned savagely, as he always did at the prospect of any additional severity.

"Oh, your blagarodie's brother comes to-morrow?"

"Yes," replied Johann, "we have nothing to feed these rogues with yet, and when we have—if we procure anything—they shall have nothing in this village till the refuse of the beetroot is eaten. Now Dietrich will take off our hands by contract a hundred and eighty, and I am sure all the sick and decrepid will never recover in such an unfavourable season. So better let him take them at thirty roubles a-piece, or even at half for his manufactory,

than let them die upon our hands like sheep of the rot. Only you must bear in mind two things—firstly that you must bring out all the sickliest portion for him to select from, for we shall find him dainty, seeing that he can choose in the villages round; and secondly, that we let them here believe that it is done to punish that barefaced robbery. They don't like going to the manufactory, do they even now, the fools?

"They don't like going to the manufactory," replied the Starost.

"I should like to go anywhere if I was fed when starving," said Johann.

"Your blagarodie is wise," answered the Starost; "those foolish creatures say, those who sell us for twenty-five roubles know that there is not much more than twenty-five roubles' worth of work in us; and those who buy us, when once they have filled our bellies with food, will not wait to get their money slowly out of us: it will pay them best to work us to death, and buy another set. But then what is that to the Oupravitel? He has only to consider whether it is advantageous for the estate."

Such is unhappily the system on which many of the manufactories in the empire are supplied with labour. Where the average price of the sound slave is £12 or £15 or £20, sets of labourers—the sick, the consumptive, the decrepid—are leased out for an indefinite period, or actually sold as artisans, for premiums varying from twenty to fifty shillings. The condition of these human hells furnishes a terrible answer to those, who cite the horrors of our own workhouses and factories to palliate the condition of the Russian serf.

A few hours after these cruel orders had been given to the old Starost, Hans, Dietrich's son, arrived alone. Hans had been established in Moscow as a dealer in *comestibles*, an occupation more congenial to his taste than any other upon earth, had it not been, as he said, for the sad drawback of daily parting with so many dainties to his customers. He was little changed, excepting that his cheeks were more rubicund and plump, and that a premature abdominal rotundity showed that he was still as much as ever given to gastronomic indulgence.

"How is this, Hans?" said the father. "Where is thy uncle Dietrich?"

"He *would* remain upon the road," replied Hans. "He is on the next estate with the Captain Ispravnik:—they will both be here to breakfast to-morrow."

"Dolt, lout, and idiot," said Johann, "I wrote for thee to come with him purposely, that he should not tarry and find out that there are other estates exactly in the condition of our own. I have no partnership with thy uncle Dietrich now; and he would have driven a bargain hard enough, without knowing that he had all the country round about to pick from. At least, thou shouldst not have left him."

"I would not," replied Hans, "if I had not known that this was the day on which mother sends off the black puddings."

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning. Neither Dietrich nor the Ispravnik had yet arrived; but breakfast was prepared, and two distinct bodies of slaves were ranged before the manor-house — the one consisting of two or three hundred of the most emaciated, ailing, and decrepid villagers, the other a promiscuous crowd of adult men, whose soles had matched the guilty footprint.

The wretches had been waiting outside for a couple of hours, till Johann, having taken his coffee and drawn on his worsted stockings, carefully warmed by the fire, and then his list shoes over them, and donned his shube, so that it snugly concealed all but the tip of his nose, walked out of his dwelling. The old Starost, cap in hand, preceded him.

"Now," said Johann, turning to the group, which he was satisfied contained one at least of the culprits, "you had better explain to them, Batushka, that the Ispravnik, with some of his people is expected every minute, and that, unless they dutifully point out to me those who broke into the store, and the ring-leaders, they will every one be unmercifully punished, painful as such a proceeding is to me."

"Master!" said the Starost, "here is a man con-

fesses to have headed the plunderers. Stand forward!"

A tall, gaunt, and yet powerful figure, clad in a long-haired horse-skin, stepped forth. His hair was rugged and uncombed, and his beard and whiskers not only of unusual length and thickness, but entangled and matted together, and hanging in ragged lengths, as we see the fleece of mountain sheep.

"Who is he? He is not of this village?" said Johann.

"He is not of this village," repeated the Starost; "but there is another who also confesses to have led the thieves. Stand forward."

A red-haired man, with a malignant blood-shot eye, advanced a step.

"Well," said Johann, with a smile, "I dare say that they are both right. We will make an example of them both."

"Yes," repeated the Starost; "but each contends that the other was not there; and each points out a different set of accomplices. Now, if you should punish those who were not present, the example will be lost; for when the real criminals find that others have suffered for their transgression, they may become further emboldened to break into another of your nobility's stores—perhaps even plunder a granary."

"That is true," said Johann, changing colour at the bare suggestion. "I see clearly that we must punish both the sets denounced."

"One moment," interrupted the Starost, whose eyes glistened with a fierce brightness, "I will never interfere on the side of mercy; but since one of these accusations is evidently false, why may not both be so? and thus the guilty will still escape."

"It is puzzling," said Johann; "the matter is becoming serious. I have many thousand roubles worth of corn and roots, my private property. Truly, I wish Dietrich were arrived."

"You are so wise and learned," said the Starost.

"Philosophy and mechanical genius," replied the steward, gratified at this unusual compliment from the old man's sullen lips,—"philosophy and mechanical genius do not always assist us in the ordinary walk of life. With all I know—to unravel this matter, I wish I had my brother's head."

"Dost thou?" said the Starost, with a loud, shrill, laugh of infernal exultation, repeating aloud: "*He wishes for his brother's head!*" and giving at the same time a signal, which he was induced for its frightful point and aptitude to make prematurely, the red-haired man advanced; and, drawing from beneath his sheepskin a heavy ball, rolled it up to the feet of the steward.

It was a human head, defaced and livid, with the gore coagulated and frozen into the same fixity as the hideous expression of its features—the well known features of Dietrich!

"Harkye, brethren all," said the Starost, "here you are brought up like oxen to the slaughter-house, like sheep to the shambles; but lo! the axes and the knives are wrested from the butcher's hand and placed in your own. Nine villages have risen before day-break: they are roaring in the flames."

"And the flames are being quenched in blood," replied the red-haired man with a hiccup, "though the brandy feeds them. I have driven fourteen versts—look at that head; I cut it off!"

"Off the body of the Niemitz, who came to buy

you, like overworked horses in Moscow for the knacker," said the Starost; "and this is the brother who wished to sell you."

"Rise!—rise!" continued the old man to the slaves, pushing down and placing his broad foot on the chest of the affrighted Johann, who, speechless in his terror, fell to the ground without a struggle. "Rise ye! whose backs smart—whose bellies are griped by hunger—who are doomed to the manufactory, the churchyard, and the lash! Your holiday is come! Death to the stranger!—death to the Niemitz, and the Oupravitel, and the Baron! Kill!—burn!—destroy and eat!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!—Death to the Niemitz and the Baron! Blood and food!" shouted the slaves.

"But the Captain Ispravnik . . . .!" suggested a timid voice from the crowd, distinctly audible, as its simultaneous cheer was hushed.

"The Captain Ispravnik's head is gone through the other villages!" replied the Starost. And then addressing the man in the horse-skin: "Stand forward, Mattvei Mattveitch! Do you not know him, brethren?" he knocked him down with a blow of his axe just as he spoke and lied in the Emperor's name. "Long live the Emperor!—for that blow I forgive him the one that laid me low."

"Yes," said the red-haired man with some jealousy, "he fought, but he has more of the soldier than the Moujik. He has no heart but when his blood is up. *I* cut the Ispravnik's throat when his people were down. Come, follow *me!*"

"Come, follow *us*!" said the Starost, still mindful of the times of Pugatcheff, and judging of the condition of the whole country by his own immediate district. "Each one to his taste; the axe, the plough

and the fire, are all good in turns. Blood, food, and brandy first, my children!—and then the fight; for those who only love the strife!"

"Death, death, death, to the Oupravitel!" roared the crowd.

"Death to the Niemetz and his seed!" replied the Starost; and the red-haired Moujik, leading the way, and the crowd having bound the steward, rushed into the house to wreak their vengeance on its other inmates.

Mattheus leaned upon his axe and smiled gloomily as they passed him. He looked on as he would on the waters of a torrent, taking no more part to aid or check its fury.

"Riot and bloodshed!" he said; "one hour of vengeance to interrupt the long monotony of this fate: then death, Siberia, and the knout, for the few—happy alternatives! The famine-stricken will eat their fill: the long-oppressed will glut their hatred: and then for the many, the common curse will work on again—the long curse of three thousand years!"

* * * * *

We will draw a veil over the bloody saturnalia of the revolted slaves. It was the common history of the partial rebellions constantly occurring in some part or other of the Russian empire—probably somewhere whilst you, reader, are perusing these pages—where the peasantry, only rising when goaded like the overloaded camel to a state of rabid desperation, are animated by a ferocity usually as foreign to their nature as to the camel's, but which nevertheless displays itself in acts of cruelty that would startle the red Indian.

It is worthy of remark, that this same Russian

peasantry, in its ordinary, or what may be termed its normal frame of mind and temper, should be, with many striking faults, gentle, humane, submissive, and difficult to rouse from its enduring and submissive apathy; whilst the peasantry of Poland, comparatively turbulent, excitable, and prone to violence, are humane and forgiving when the struggle is over; and, easily urged to plot, and threaten, and rebel, have seldom heart to strike the blow, except in the hot blood of actual strife. Nothing but the most terrible oppression can drive the Muscovite to incur the dangers of resistance; but when once he is urged thus far, there is no imaginable barbarity which he dreads committing. The Pole, ever ready to draw on his head the penalties of rebellion, shows only a noble cowardice in striking his victim. This pleasing trait is characterized in a well-known Polish anecdote.

The four serfs of two Polish noblemen, in their cups, canvassing the hardships they endure, conspire against their lords, and resolve to murder them that night; they fix the very hour. As it approaches, one of them observes:

"After all, it is difficult to cut the throat of a man, be he what he may, whom one has known from one's childhood; still he must die, so suppose that we two go and kill your lord, and you ours?"

"We were just thinking the same thing," reply the other two; "let us go." And, stimulating their resolution with a few more drams, they each depart upon their errand.

But the first speakers, as they approach the dwelling of their comrade's lord, consult together, and say:

"Who is it we are going to slay?—a man we do not know—a man who has never done us any harm! It is impossible to kill him in cold blood;" and they turn back, and abandon their design.

Meanwhile, the same scruple has suggested itself to the other couple, on the very threshold of the doomed man's door; but, to put an end to their irresolution, the bolder of the two knocks at once.

"Come in, my children!" said the lord, "it is a cold night; I suppose you have lost your way. Warm yourselves by the fire, and take a drop of something."

One of the serfs nudges the other, and whispers:

"You must do it, I can't."

"Nor I," says the other. "One can't hurt such a man;" and, with a profusion of bows, the two would-be assassins, disarmed by a kind word, take their leave.

Such is the Polish peasant, but not the Muscovite. Only an hour has passed; one half the village is in flames. Gorged with food, and stupified with brandy, many of the rioters lie insensible amidst the slaughtered cattle, and the dissevered and still palpitating limbs and mangled bodies of the steward, his wife and daughter, and his immediate servants. The famished wretches, in the madness of their fury and intoxication, fire the long-coveted stacks and granaries, which in burning will consume or crush them. But, in the midst of their terrible revelry, in which the Starost takes no present part, but which he encourages, seated on a cask, with a reeking knife in his red hand, a shout is heard; some distant shots follow, and an alarm is given:

"The Cossacks!—the Cossacks!"

A sudden panic seizes the crowd. The old Starost, who has been in fact resorting to a stratagem, now resumes his authority.

"Come, my children! let us seek the protection of the woods and of the deep snow; let us make our way to the seven villages, and join our brethren! they have musketry."

The old man, bent on effecting some organization, and full of hopes which Mattheus never shared, thus drew after him the whole population of the village from the scene of riot and murder, leaving only the dead and their drunken companions, and the scattered plunder of the mansion-house upon the field.

* * * * *

All was now silent except the crackling of the flames; and Bob Bridle, hitherto shut up with Lucifer in the stable—against the door of which waggons and logs of wood, and the wreck of furniture had been piled—now finding the coast clear, made his way out of the window.

The whole building, excepting the extremity of this wing, was already either consumed or one roaring furnace. His first step was on to the body of the red-haired Moujik, who was lying quite besotted, with a knife in one hand, a bottle in the other, and the head of Dietrich still beneath his arm.

A strange outcry met his ear: the door of the store-house or larder, one of the apartments still unconsumed, was open; and here, as he cast his eyes about him for an axe, he discerned Hans suspended by the heels, although his arms reached the ground.

Bob Bridle hastened to relieve him. He had turned from red to a deep purple in the face, but was otherwise uninjured. Whether the rioters had for-

gotten to wreak further vengeance, or that the marked sympathy which he had evinced for their condition had hitherto saved him; for the notion of their being hungry had touched the most sensitive chord in his bosom.

"Either I have stretched, or the rope has," said Hans, regaining his legs, "for my head was three feet from the ground at first; a pretty way to settle one's breakfast!"

"Come!" replied the groom, not displeased to see the steward's son so little agitated; for no impression, even of fear, could be immediately produced on the unconquerable dulness of Hans, whose understanding was, besides, still in the position from which his body had just been relieved.

"Come, be alive."

"A pretty way to treat one," continued he, "when I came to stay for a week's holiday."

"Ay, they will treat you worse if you don't look sharp. Come, help me to get out the horse, and I will take you up behind me."

But all Bob's eloquence could not persuade the youth to aid him;—the larder had only been half plundered; and no sooner had his bewildered eyes rested on the scene of blood and ruin before him, than they reverted to the strings of smoked geese, the hams, and ropes of onions. Of these objects alone, and of the danger that menaced them, did his disturbed brain seem to conceive any distinct idea.

The smoke was already beginning to fill the stable, the grey horse neighed loudly from within, and the groom, therefore, fell to work alone. Nothing could exceed the energy with which he exerted himself. He cleared the door—the door itself was giving way

before the redoubled blows of his axe—when the roar of the rioters was again heard. Instead of the Cossacks, a furious body of revolters from the seven villages had just joined them, and they returned to the scene of devastation rendered fiercer by their recent panic.

Hans was seized, just as, after placing in safety a large portion of the provisions, he was in the act of rolling out a huge cask of sauer-kraut. His hands were still upon the edge of the tub, and his lips were sententiously and mechanically repeating "Waste not, want not!" when his heels were tripped up, and he was plunged head foremost into the mess of fermented cabbage, amidst the savage laughter of the peasants.

"Now for the groom! now for the grey horse! now for the Niemetz who gave the horse fair oats whilst our children hungered!"

Bob had just broken through the door — he had saddled and bridled Lucifer, and donned his great-coat; he had secured his pipe, his Bible, and a horse-cloth — his foot was almost in the stirrup, when he was seized, knocked down, and bound.

Hark!" said Mattheus, who now joined them, "touch him not, brethren! be just, if not merciful. Which of you has he ever harmed?"

"Down, down, down with him!" replied the infuriated mob.

"Mattvei Mattveitch," said the old Starost, shrugging his shoulders, "what is he to thee or me? do not exasperate them."

"Stand back," said Mattheus, advancing to release the groom; but Mattheus had made no imposing display of his courage to acquire influence with the

rioters of his own village;—he had not even taken part in their violence or cruelty to place his zeal beyond suspicion, and so a dozen arms were raised to resent his interference, and he was struck senseless to the ground.

"Hark ye!" said a voice, "it is stale to hang, or burn, or disembowel, let us lash him to the heels of his own grey demon-horse, and start the horse with a wisp of lighted straw beneath his tail."

"Hurrah!" replied the mob, delighted at the grotesquely barbarous malice of the proposition, so thoroughly in the spirit which animates these *jacqueries* of the Russian boors.

"Hurrah!" no sooner said than done. Emboldened by liquor, or ignorant of the stallion's fierceness—with axes, poles, and ropes, they rush into his box—but a loud, terrific scream of fury from the angry animal vibrates above the din of this strange scene. Tearing the intruders with his teeth, and battling with his forelegs as he tramples them right and left, the mighty steed bounds out of his box over their prostrate bodies.

With a half affrighted, half triumphant neigh, he gallops round amidst the flying crowd, his black nostrils dilating into red transparency, his wild eye flashing, and his mane and tail streaming in the breeze, like the flames which now blaze lambently in it from every part of the building.

Whilst this is passing, a half-drunken woman, who has been gorging her two infants with the food now wasting and trodden under foot, approaches Bob Bridle.

"Niemetz, or no Niemetz," says she, "no one shall harm the little man who fed my babes;" and

cutting the only cord that bound him, she bids him stand upon his feet.

At the same moment Lucifer, who, scouring wildly round, had been "scattering his enemies," as the author of God save the Queen expresses it, bounds playfully up to his master. Bob seizes the rein—his foot is in the stirrup—he leaps into the saddle in an instant.

"Now through 'em, Lucy, never say die!" and, pressing his heels to the horse's flank, Bob gallops resolutely through the densest part of the mob which is just gathered before him, upon the only outlet to the high road.

Some shots are fired, the blows of axes, knives, and clubs rain down to arrest his progress;—but the rider and the horse emerge from the human cloud—and then, still at a furious gallop, the fugitive responds to the savage yell of disappointment which pursues him; but, as Bob turns to utter it, he sees that the blood of the gallant grey is flowing fast, as well as his own.

* * * * *

When the Uradnik of the Cossacks with his detachment had arrived within a few versts of the first revolted village, they discovered Bob Bridle, regardless of his own wound, seated by the road side with the head of the dead Lucifer upraised upon his knees.

"Poor Lucy!" was the only observation which escaped his lips, and then he wiped mechanically, not the two small tears—the first and last he ever shed—but the bloody froth which oozed from the stiffened tongue of the lifeless steed. The gallant stallion, without slackening in his speed, had borne him to a

place of safety, and then, choked by the inward hæmorrhage, he suddenly fell down upon the road as if shot through the heart, and expired in full career.

The Cossacks who, from their long habit of playing the sheep-dog and the hunting-hound, have no feeling for the miseries of the human victims on whose trace they are loosened, all shewed their rude sympathy with the mute but significant grief of the fond rider over his dead horse.

They rode on without troubling him with unnecessary questions, and many a rough bony hand was stretched out to pat affectionately the lean ewe-neck of the steed which the passing horseman was bestriding.

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Beside the smoking ruins of the manor-house, the Uradnik's attention was attracted, as he dismounted to warm himself by the embers, and looked coldly and indifferently on the mangled limbs and corpses scattered around, by the cask of sauer-kraut with the feet and legs of Hans still sticking out of it.

"Here," said he, pushing Mattheus with his foot, "this fellow, too, is strong-built; set him apart from the rest with the other three drunken prisoners;—he will make a guardsman."

CHAPTER XXV.

A STRONG corps of the Russian army of the Caucasus is encamped on a height a few miles south of Anapa, on the Notwash coast. This half of the Circassian isthmus adjoining the Black Sea, contains the higher range of the Caucasus inhabited by the Tcherkesses and the Abazeks.

A range of forts has been built and garrisoned on the very shore, protected and supplied by the Russian ships of war; but they have never even succeeded in establishing any land communication between one and the other, and indeed the sole object of this occupation has been to prevent the mountaineers from receiving foreign succour.

The most sanguine of the Russian governors and commanders have long abandoned all notion of penetrating into these mountains by force, and in reality despaired of effecting by policy or corruption what they cannot by the sword, at least till the western portion of the Isthmus is subdued.

There are several reasons for this: the Tcherkesses, or pure Circassians, and the Abazeks, are as numerous as all the other mongrel people inhabiting the middle and west, and they are as superior to them in courage and intellect as in personal appearance.

Terrible defeats have always followed any attempt to penetrate into their mountains; and such are their shrewdness and patriotism that they are no more to be bribed, cajoled, or intimidated, than conquered. At least the unremitting efforts of the Russians during three parts of a century have failed in making the slightest progress by any of these means.

The successes of the Russian arms or policy, in Circassia, which we often read of, refer, therefore, only to the eastern half; and even here, when with incredible pains-taking, Russia has made some advance, the events of a single summer have always thrown her back to the point at which she began it some five or six years preceding.

The General commanding in this instance is only desirous of reaching the next fort along the shore with as little loss as possible; not that this attempt to open a communication which will be closed the moment his army has passed, can produce the slightest result; but then it will tell well in a despatch to the Emperor, and if the Emperor is not entirely deceived as to its insignificance, it will figure in the Prussian State Gazette and the Allgemeine Zeitung, and thence go the round of the European press.

The warlike inhabitants of the coast who pasture their flocks almost within reach of the Russian cannon, have no particular interest in preventing the column from effecting this military promenade, though they lose no opportunity of harassing these enemies who usually keep so securely within their walls, protected by their redoubted artillery and abundant ammunition.

The people of this coast are the most daring in the whole world—the most skilful in the use of arms—

the Russians possessing, perhaps, as little individual courage—as awkward in use of weapons—as any race existing; it is, therefore, not to be wondered at that an utter discouragement pervades the army, and that the contempt of these fearless mountaineers for their invaders incredibly increases their hardihood.

They dread the Russian grape and volleys; but the Russian once isolated, or brought to close quarters with the Tcherkess, dreams no more of resistance than if naked in the clutches of the tiger.

The Russian column has halted on a hill, but it has sent out a close line of skirmishers—so numerous that they can almost join hands—and yet it is only here and there that, behind a rock or knoll, a few straggling natives take an occasional aim, always with deadly effect, in answer to the incessant fire of the Russian line.

One of these skirmishers has unbuttoned his coarse great coat, for in the Caucasian campaign *carte blanche* is now allowed for any infringement of the regulation, though General Yermoloff was disgraced for having ventured upon it.

"So," quoth the soldier, pausing to breathe, "these are the mountains of the Caucasus, the cradle of the human race! famous in hoary antiquity! and yet —I never thought to see them thus. I have often sympathised with the gallant barbarians who laugh to scorn even *his* power, and yet here I am pitted against them. I must endeavour to slay—or be slain. This is the most galling vengeance of a tyrant."

At this moment, three Tcherkessian horsemen, watching behind a point of rock, were daring each other on. The young Ouzden Abdallah wanted a slave, and the other two joined him in his martial frolic.

Swooping down, like the eagle from a cloud, they descend the hill side at a gallop, and dash right at the line of skirmishers. The shot rattle around them; but such is the trepidation of the soldiers that their aim becomes more uncertain. The horsemen are amongst them—they scatter them— a lasso tightens around the neck of the contemplative soldier—he is dragged along the ground at the full speed of a horse—then thrown across it insensible, and when he awakes to consciousness a vassal of the Ouzden is pouring water over him, and he sees the Russian column on the hill, and the line of skirmishers still popping away, many hundred feet below him.

* * * * *

The captive is given over to two of his host's slaves; these slaves are fellow countrymen, who were made prisoners together many months ago.

After all the terrible accounts of the cruelty of the Circassians, purposely propagated in the Russian armies to prevent desertion, he is a little reassured at their healthy and almost contented appearance.

"Now," said one of the slaves to the other, "by the beard of the old Mollah, for whom we smuggle the wine, this fellow reminds me of some one we both knew—"

"Of Alexi Alexeivitch, to be sure," replied his companion.

"Good God!" said the Lieutenant Alexius, starting back—for it was he: "how do you know me?"

"It is! it is!" shouted Lochadoff and Durakoff in one breath, and folding the ex-Lieutenant in their arms, "welcome! welcome, old fellow!"

"Welcome?" repeated the Lieutenant at length with a faint smile.

"Ay, welcome—do we not see you in the dress of a private?" replied Durakoff. "I can tell you that you will find this a place of enjoyment compared to the confinement in a soldier's great-coat, pent up within the walls of Anapa, together with other great-coats with human beings in them, and fed on sour mouldy biscuit."

"Is there no chance of recovering one's freedom?"

"Not much; but then on the whole one lives freer here than one did before."

"We are under less restraint," said Lochadoff, "than when we held commissions in the guards. Our Tcherkess master, like all the rest of them, is reckless of life, free with his yataghan, but not cruel. Slavery with these people partakes of the patriarchal character of the East and of Biblical times. We are regarded now as humble members of the family. You will be tolerably comfortable as soon as they have performed the operation."

"The operation!" said Alexius with a shudder, "is it true then?"

"Yes, your master will slit the skin of your heel with his sharp yataghan, and introduce a little chopped horse-hair. The scar heals, and you will feel nothing more; you are then left at large—he knows that on a long march you would fall lame again."

"It is better than chains or prisons," added Durakoff. "Should you be sold to another master who wants you to use your legs, the skin is slit afresh, the horse-hair poulticed out, your wound healed, and you are as well as ever. I wish we could have the luck to be all three bought by the old Mollah with the red nose who is always quoting the Koran."

"And now tell us," said Lochadoff, "how you

came to be degraded to the ranks. Our own story, and the foolish frolic for which we paid the penalty, is well known to you."

"Well," said the Lieutenant, with a sigh, "it was a sad and sudden business. No sooner was my friend the poet—the great bard of his country—laid in his grave—"

"What P— ?—is he dead then ?"

"God bless me, I forgot that you had been buried alive here. The whole empire has been ringing with it. But let me hurry over as briefly as I may my sorrowful narration. You know then, gentlemen, that the great deceased always laboured under a painful jealousy of the two beings he loved best in the world—his wife and her sister's husband, D—. This jealousy became at length a madness. About a month ago, he fell upon one of those strange expedients which the eccentricity of his genius so frequently suggested.

"His wife, his brother-in-law, and himself were dining together, and as they rose from the table he first put out one candle, and then—pretending to snuff the other—extinguished that also. Drawing a burnt cork from his pocket, he hastily blackened his lips, and kissing his wife in the darkness, hurried out to seek a light, thus leaving her and the presumed paramour together."

"Our great poet was not original in his expedient," observed Durakoff, "I remember it in a French vaudeville."

"Whether original or not," continued Alexius, with some irritation, "this incident has occasioned the saddest tragedy recorded in our annals, for it has quenched the brightest genius that ever shed lustre on his people.

"When he returned into the dining-room with a light, his brother-in-law's lips were blackened, having taken from the wife's the damning impress which stamped her infidelity!

"To you who both knew him, I need scarcely explain that nothing but blood could wash out such an injury—an injury the suspicion or the presentiment of which had for years embittered his existence. Notwithstanding all the protestations of his brother-in-law, he resorted to those means which left him no alternative but to meet him. Our gifted friend was struck to the earth by a fatal shot; but he rose again to his feet, and taking a full aim at his adversary, fell dead as he pulled the trigger.

"Strange in his life, his death was stranger still—in this respect, that he left irrecusable evidence to the whole world of the spirit of prophecy which enabled him to forsee it in its minutest details; for he died so exactly like the hero of his last poem even in his very words, that I who saw him die could not more graphically paint that harrowing scene than by quoting his own works."

"This is strange indeed!" said Lochadoff.

"Poor P—!" observed his companion, "though, as for the prophecy, it was about as wonderful as if I were to prognosticate that we should get drunk to-night upon the Mollah's wine."

"And what became of D—?" said Lochadoff.

"D—," replied Alexius, "has left the empire, but strangely enough protesting still his innocence. He says—as he did before the duel—that when the poet put out the lights, in his agitation, he kissed him, the brother-in-law, instead of his wife, and thus his lips were blackened; that if his fury had not blinded him

he might have seen that hers were unstained as her purity."

"But what has the death of P— to do with your disgrace?"

"You shall hear. No sooner were the last pulsations of that mighty heart silenced, than the Emperor, who you know had all his life persecuted P— until within the last few years, and even then treated him with disfavour and held him in aversion, the Emperor was the first to raise the note of woe, to which a whole nation with one voice responded.

"All the honours that could be lavished on the dead gathered in mockery around the grave of him whose life the Imperial contempt had branded."

"He thought, no doubt," observed Durakoff, "that a dead poet, like a bottled scorpion in the collection of an entomologist, was no longer noxious, and that it would redound to the glory of his reign to have paid these exaggerated honours to a great man. Don't look so frightened, Alexius, it is difficult to believe at first, I know, but you might laugh at the very beard of Nicolai—if he would only wear one—and nothing but the echo of the free rocks would answer you here."

"I for one, was however deceived by this Imperial pantomime of sorrow. It seemed that the petty animosities which once pursued him with their persecution had been buried with him, and succeeded by regret and appreciation. You know both of you the sincerity of my own fond admiration of his genius—how I have followed him to catch and treasure every flash radiating from it—to note down with religious care each plaintive sound of harmony that broke from that bruised spirit—that incarnation of a nation's

suffering—and so, gentlemen, was it not pardonable in me to dream—not that his mantle had descended to his sorrowing follower, but that I had inherited, perhaps, some humble shadow of his inspiration?

"I am not a bold man, I care not to avow it. I was not made to struggle with danger or adversity, and I should never have dared the remotest risk of the Tsar's displeasure. But when I saw him scattering laurels on the bier of the great deceased, and when that magic voice was hushed for ever, I said, 'this is a propitious moment for a child of song,' and I published an ode to my departed idol.

"I did not receive laurels, or praise, or an Imperial message, or a diamond ring, as perhaps I had anticipated; but an order—"

"That is of no use to you here, my good fellow," interrupted Durakoff.

"An order," continued Alexius, "was issued for my degradation to the ranks, and transfer to the Caucasus. I cannot to this hour discover what there was offensive in my stanzas, as you shall judge, for I will read them to you."

And out of an inner pocket of his coarse, greasy great-coat he took a piece of tattered oilskin in which he had wrapped with all the care of a fond author a well thumbed copy of his verses.

"Stop," said Durakoff, "I dare say they are innocent enough; but I can guess the cause of your disgrace—perhaps you offered to read them to him."

"You shall judge," said the ex-Lieutenant.

"Not I, replied Durakoff, "read them to Lochadoff; the sun is going down, I must go to see after the old Mollah's wine."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MORE than three years have elapsed since we last introduced the Grand Duke Constantine to the reader. He is now with his Duchess in Warsaw, the capital of his brother's Polish kingdom, which he governs with a rod of iron. Time has neither diminished his affection for her, nor curbed the cruel violence of his temper. The austere republican, Joachim Lelewel, writing the Polish history for his nephews, says, "He began to lead a more regular life. He was said to have corrected his faults, and to have become more gentle; which means that he no longer fired at human beings; that he no longer killed them at a blow, as he was wont before to do; but that he now caused them to die a lingering death by his severity."

When the jealous vigilance of autocratic power in Russia proper is considered, where it watches the lifeless corpse of the only party which it had to dread, as a wild beast watches the carcass of its prey, mangling it whenever a falling shadow seems to its suspicious hatred a faint movement of vitality—it may be readily imagined with what acuteness and severity it was exercised in the kingdom of Poland, where the rooted hatred of all ranks of the people really menaced its existence.

Legions of spies were dispersed among all classes of society. There were the spies of the Russian

secret police watching both the Poles and the conduct of Constantine, and there were the Grand Duke Constantine's own immediate spies.

The country was at once abandoned to all the frivolous violence of the Grand Duke, which was supposed to strike terror, and oppressed by the suspicious and Machiavelian policy of the cabinet of St. Petersburg.

In a truly infernal spirit, it forced the youth of Poland into the public schools, where, fearful that such portion of its time as was not absorbed by military exercises, if devoted to instruction would give rise to a spirit of investigation and resistance, it systematically introduced and encouraged all those vices which lead to physical and mental deterioration and demoralization.

Those who resisted the pernicious influence exercised, and turned with horror from the examples set before them, were sent to Siberia, or transported into Russia as common soldiers, or shut up in fortresses and dungeons. The infamous Novosiltsoff, in the city of Vilna alone, (containing the celebrated university), converted ten convents and monasteries into prisons, which he filled with the Polish students.

All the chief Russian agents of authority were men anxious to propagate their vices, boastful of their debauchery. Novosiltsoff, to whose care the superintendence of youth was entrusted, and a companion in infamy within whose especial province it fell to interfere in spiritual matters, both died the death of Herod, the loathsome consequence of the crapulous orgies with which it was their custom to relieve the monotony of their cruelty.

Even Warsaw, the gay and beautiful *Varsava*, so

long accustomed to smile sweetly through her tears, appears in mourning now.

Varsava! which with her misfortunes and her levity, just as Venice, amongst cities, with her crimes and guile, recalls Lucretia Borgia, just as St. Petersburg images Semiramis or that second Catherine whose lusts and triumphs shamed its walls—by a similar analogy brings to mind the captive Queen of Scots—Mary! most loveable yet frail of queens, whose hair, when the headsman's axe came down on her fair neck, was turned already grey before time had yet destroyed one line of her beauteous features—Mary! for whose fate with all her faults and foibles, the pity of ages has been upon men's tongues and in their hearts, and yet in whose behalf, whilst living and defenceless so few of the most restless swords leaped forth!

And then—if every capital typify a nation, and the history of every nation have its moral; if Rome and Athens rise like parasitic plants from the trunk of the old fallen tree, to prove the mutability of human things, the possible abasement of the mighty; if Holland's cities, pile-supported in the marsh, point out the power of industry—if Madrid, the diseased heart of a nation, in its atrophy—on whose possessions once the sun could never set—show in its humiliation, the effects of bigotry and absolutism—then Warsaw stands the living witness of the cruel rapacity and bad faith of princes, the ingratitude and apathy of nations.

Warsaw, so difficult to depress to dulness, is rendered sad at last. Mothers are mourning for their sons, and citizens live in hourly dread of falling

victims to the malice of the all-pervading spies—veterans and their young hot-blooded sons, forced to serve beneath the Grand Duke's tyranny, commit suicide to escape it.

Two post-carriages traverse the Saxon Square. If they had arrived a little earlier, their inmates might have seen a Polish nobleman and his lady forced to sweep one of the avenues leading to it, because their country coachman had not recognised and saluted the Grand Duke Constantine when he passed by, the coachman being condemned to a thousand lashes.

There is a secretary in that second carriage, with long flowing locks à la Raphael, and a broad-brimmed hat; if he were caught by the tetchy tyrant in a garb that savours so much of innovation, he would be served in the same manner as several foreigners yesterday, who were marched by beat of drum to this very spot, where the redundant locks of their hair, and the borders of their beaver were clipped together by a pair of shears.

The report soon spreads amongst the bystanders, that these are the carriages of the Marquis de St. Armand—the young and promising French diplomatist, whose departure from Vienna has been announced, and who is proceeding to St. Petersburg.

The spectators feel an interest they dare not evince; for, since the revolution, which has drawn the elder branch of the Bourbons into their second exile, the police spies and agents are more active, vigilant, and malevolent than ever.

The Emperor Nicholas has frowned sternly on tricoloured France, and everything indicates that he is watching his opportunity to pour his legions across

the frontier—a report already spreading among th
Polish army that it is to be forced to draw the swor
against a people with whom it has so many intimat
and mutual sympathies, though by its various govern
ments it has been perpetually betrayed—by its abso
lutism under Louis XV—by its Republic, and by it
Empire; for it was then still reserved for Poland to ex
perience similar abandonment from the constitutiona
monarchy of the country for which it cherished so hap
less an affection. The spectators, therefore, wonde
among themselves whether the Marquis, though pur
posely chosen from an old legitimatist family, will b
allowed to proceed to the Russian capital; whethe
even the Grand Duke will receive him with civility
whether he will be admitted at the Belvedere?

CHAPTER XXVII.

General le Gendre is seated in an apartment of the palace of the Belvedere, accompanied by General Sass, another of the Grand Duke's satellites, when the chief of the police of Warsaw, Matthew Lubovidski, enters, and is informed that he cannot yet have access to the Grand Duke.

"We are all waiting to see him; but *she* is with him."

The chief of the police shrugged up his shoulders imperceptibly.

"Well, well, we must have patience; but these are stirring times. It is a trial, gentlemen, to 'furnish' an antechamber when there is work to be done."

"Or pleasure to be harvested," said Le Gendre. "When gold flows in faster than one has time to gamble it away; when the glass sparkles to tempt us, and smiles woo us. Work or play for me, but not inaction."

"My good Le Gendre," said the police chief, "plunge into orgies to your ears. We are no saints any of us, and will join you in proper season; but there is a time for all things. This is a moment for vigilance."

"I can blend business and pleasure wonderfully," said Le Gendre. "When my mouth is parched, my head oppressed, my appetite gone, and my pocket-book empty, my vigilance is sharpened, and I can scent you out a traitor or a brooding malignant by very instinct."

"Well, gentlemen, how do you like your new colleague?" said the police master.

"Krilov?" asked Sass.

"I mean Krilov. You know, of course, that such is not his name. You know, probably, who he really was. That name might sound gratingly to ears supreme. His vast fortune was forfeited in the mother country; but his services have well redeemed his errors. It is gratifying to see Poland made a place of probation, where those who have offended can wipe out this disfavour by their zeal. I commend him to you as a master spirit, though driven from the seventh heaven."

"He is none the worse for that," said Le Gendre, who, as before mentioned, had been dismissed with disgrace from the Russian service.

As the words of the police-master implied, Poland had been made a sink, into which all that was most flagrantly corrupt and infamous in the rotten administration of the Russian empire was poured, so that it promised to be useful

"There is one thing I do not like about him," said Sass; "he is not a jovial companion; he never quite unlaces; he shies the bottle and the orgie."

"Not so," said Le Gendre, "but he will not drink wine which is not perfect in vintage, keeping, and aroma; he scorns a figurante or a chorus singer."

"At least," said the Grand Master, "I trust, gentlemen, we shall all pull well together. Our separate

paths, though they may meet at the cross-road of head-quarters, are chalked out without interfering with each other. We have the Polish nation at large to work upon, a wide field, with room for every one. Krilov is—at least professionally—a good companion, an active, zealous, indefatigable servant, invaluable since poor Novosiltsof's death."

"Ay, talk to me of jolly Novosiltsof!" said Le Gendre.

"Well," continued the Grand Master, "though Krilov is not such a roaring, ranting debauchee, his talents and his zeal are not far inferior to Novosiltsof's. Bamberg is good, but Krilov beats him; and I swear to you, that at least the two together are more dreaded than Novosiltsof was alone."

"Ay," said Le Gendre to himself, "they hunt in couples; they ruined each other reciprocally in the mother country; and so, with mortal hate betwixt them, are linked together, to work in emulation of each other's conduct, and to be spies upon it here. It is a weary trade, but it pays." And here Le Gendre cast an involuntary glance at Sass, to whom he had long devined that he was bound in similar companionship.

At this moment Krilov joined them. He was a man prematurely stricken in years. The sarcastic expression of his features, and their very bilious, —almost jaundiced—hue, rendered them still more cynical.

He was greeted with well simulated cordiality.

"We are all losing our time here," said the Police Master.

"Are no despatches come yet from St. Petersburg respecting the Marquis de St. Armand?" inquired Krilov.

"None," replied Sass.

"What a strange business!" said the Police Master; "from what his Imperial Highness said, I was apprehensive of seeing him turned back without being permitted to alight, a mode of proceeding the Imperial cabinet would have censured; and now, he is not only received with a courtesy which will excite disapprobation, but his women are greeted with tokens of favour and distinction, which give rise to all sorts of remarks and rumours in the city."

"Ay," said Le Gendre, "the wind blows that way; they have been taken into the sudden favour of the Princess."

"They are with her now," said Sass.

"This I will say," said Le Gendre, "that I have never beheld at once two women so beautiful in one family as the Marchioness de St. Armand and the sister of the Marquis."

"You are not singular in your observation," observed the Police Master, "their beauty is the common theme."

"But then the one—the sister," said Sass, "as mournful as a Magdalen—would impart a chill to an icicle; and the wife as haughty as Lucifer in petticoats would put even Le Gendre, with his brazen look, out of countenance."

"They are two magnificent creatures in their way," replied the Police Master; "there is no denying it; so much so, that I should have wondered less had the predilection been on the part of his Highness than of the Princess; but they are cold, proud, and distant as the d—l!"

"The magic of the Princess dreads no rivalship," said Le Gendre. "I am sure this compliance with her whim is the greatest proof of it; but, as I was

saying, I never but once before saw two such handsome women in one family, and that was at Vienna with jolly Novosiltsof. They were Poles: and there is no gainsaying that your lashkas (Polish women) are sometimes very fair. Novosiltsof had no eye for beauty, or I no powers of description. I could not make him recognise these beauties by the account I gave him of them.

"'It is either this family or that family,' said he, 'or the other; but, to make sure, you shall have them all kneeling at your feet before supper-time to-morrow. They have all sons, or brothers, or lovers at the university, or they would not be here.'

"That night he picked out from the schools, and arrested all the students connected with all the fair dames he had named. It was reported that they were to be conveyed away. And, by the Lord! old jolly Novosiltsof kept his promise. Sisters, and mothers, and distant relatives, who took a touching interest—the most charming groups you ever saw—were besieging the old sinner's door.

"'Le Gendre is the man you must apply to,' said he, 'two at a time.'

"And there, in couples, I had them weeping, interceding, coaxing, kneeling to me!"

"Well, and did you let the youths go?"

"Not all," replied Le Gendre; "I wished to have dismissed them all; but Novosiltsof was a tough old Turk. 'We must not make this quite a jest,' he said; 'these Poles, I have defiled their mothers! are all seditious in their hearts;' so three or four students were sent off to hard labour."

"Well," observed the Police Master, "I wish this disdainful Marchioness and her seductive sister had

relations in the schools of Wilna. I should vastly like to see them kneeling to one of the Emperor's servants I could name."

"Gentlemen," said Krilov, "there is nothing impossible to genius; it is a word Napoleon struck out of the dictionary. There should be nothing impossible to one of our body wishing to gratify the wishes of a superior."—Here he bowed to the Police Master of Warsaw. — "If your Excellencies"—turning to Legendre and Sass—"will bet me a thousand silver roubles, I will wager that you shall see the Marchioness and her sister-in-law kneeling to the proxy of my respected patron, in the person of your humble servant."

"Oh, oh, oh!" replied Legendre, "how very probable! Why, for fascination, I would back my grog-blossoms and Sass's gouty legs against your dead eye and your livid skin."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE Marchioness of St. Armand and her sister had just left the Duchess of Lowicz; a chamberlain was conducting them to their carriage.

The Marchioness stepped with the port of a princess over the gorgeous arabesques figured on the deep, downy carpet; and her sister, pale and thoughtful, moved on with a vacant eye, accustomed or indifferent to the surrounding splendour.

Krilov advanced from the recess of a window. He whispered to the bewildered chamberlain, who retired to the other end of the apartment.

"Ladies," said Krilov, "pardon the assurance of one who is fascinated. O let me conduct you whither I can say, between four walls, all that my heart dictates!"

The surprise of the two ladies may be imagined. The disdainful and imperious expression which had risen to the face of the Marchioness at the offensive impertinence of the speaker's manner, gave way to wonder at this singular and unaccountable address. —Was he a madman?

But before an answer could suggest itself, he whis-

pered one sentence, and its effect was electrical. A deadly pallor overspread the brow of the proud Marchioness; and a hectic flush rose to the pale face of her sister, who leaned for a moment against the doorway to support herself; and then Madame de St. Armand, waving back the Chamberlain with her hand, followed the police-agent into the room to which he led the way.

* * * * *

Having closed the door, Isaakoff—for Krilov, the police-agent was no other than the ruined Prince Isaakoff—turned to his victims, and said:

"Welcome, my runaways! welcome, Blanche! welcome, Nadeshta! first a Countess, now a Marchioness; but your change of name and coronet left me really ignorant of the honour you intended us."

"Oh God!" said Blanche, "do the dead rise up?" and then, after a moment, she added, "but you pronounced a name—his name—in mercy where is he?"

"Ladies," replied the Prince, endeavouring to subdue his previous irony of manner, "great changes have taken place since we parted: I, the wealthy Prince Isaakoff, if not dead as reported, have been beggared and disgraced—you have both risen in the world, to rank and wealth. I will not say that misfortune has not changed my disposition, and taught me a fitful benevolence; but then the bitter recollection of the past sometimes stirs up my soul to its old vindictiveness; I have become by turns an angel and a fiend—your Mattheus is at this moment in my power."

"He lives!—oh God! he lives!" said Blanche.

"Your Mattheus is in my power, and so are you, you are still both my slaves. I will grant you that

your husband's diplomatic character might, under other circumstances, have shielded you ; but the Emperor is now incensed—perhaps about to draw the sword against your revolutionary France; he would delight in this indignity to its agent, he would for once protect a Russian Baron's rights. As for the Grand Duke, when he learns, which he has never learned yet, how he was deceived in your escape, he will prove inexorable. Now I am strangely moved by turns both to avenge upon Mattheus and on you my fallen fortunes, and then at times, what you will call, perhaps, a more Christian inspiration, urges me to forgive, and to see you all made happy, though, on the whole, you used me very ill."

"Oh!" said Blanche, kneeling, "listen to the voice of this good inspiration: you have suffered, let your suffering teach you mercy! Oh, save him!—save us! noble, generous Prince!"

"*You* would tempt a devil to mercy," said Isaakoff; "but Nadeshta—she whom I can make my slave again, or leave a Marchioness—stands haughtily and coldly there, suspicion in her eye, and hatred and defiance on her lip."

"Oh, sister, sister, sister!" said Blanche, in accents of heart-rending supplication.

"I pardon; but if I pardon," continued the Prince, "I must see that proud spirit curbed for once. She, too, must bend the knee, unless she be unmindful of her brother, whom I can show you one minute hence alive and well."

Nadeshta sunk upon her knees. Her fears and her affection had triumphed over her aversion and her pride.

At this moment Isaakoff clapping his hands, the door opened, and the Police Master, and the Generals Legendre and Sass appeared in the doorway indescribable astonishment depicted on their countenances.

"Gentlemen," said the Prince, "I hope my wager is won," and then turning to Matthew Lubovidski, "Here, your Excellency, is my report upon these strangers; as I think you went me halves on the bet, I trust you will excuse this little mystification by which I have ventured to withhold it from you half an hour; you will find that I thereby claim the Marchioness de St. Armand as my slave, born on my domains, and married without my permission, and her sister-in-law as equally my property, because lawfully married to another slave. As my estates are under sequestration, in the tutelage of the Crown, you will observe that it is on the Emperor's behalf I advance this claim."

"This is wondrous strange!" said the Police Master.

"Oh Mattheus! where is Mattheus, then?" said Blanche, still kneeling.

"Oh, I had forgotten, that is more strange still. Come hither, I will show him to you; by a singular fatality he is now in sight, I saw him as I passed the gate:—come hither."

Blanche followed him eagerly to the window, and there Isaakoff, pointing down, showed her a Russian sentinel. Was it a cruel jest? Oh no! the quick eye of the wife's love recognized at once the husband of her bosom, notwithstanding the disguise of this strange garb and the changes of time, suffering, and misfortune.

With a wild shriek she bounded from them. So rapid was her step that she reached the terrace unmolested; but there, in conformity with his orders the sentry, seeing a woman running thus precipitately, crossed his bayonet—the musket fell from his hands — and Mattheus was in the arms of his wife.

"What is this?" said the corporal, starting forward.

"Look!" said the Prince, from the window. "He has allowed himself to be disarmed, on guard at the palace! Does the Grand Duke ever forgive that? That will be five hundred lashes."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE increased severity of the suspicion to which the revolutionary tendencies of Western Europe have given rise have rendered the Russian oppression so intolerable, that, tempted by the hopes which they excite, the national spirit is in reality fermenting. Besides, men ask themselves why they should not really conspire, when liable to be arrested and punished on the false suspicion of conspiring? The mine now only waits the match.

At last, in the cadet-school, among that very class of youthful scholars so cruelly oppressed, the plotted insurrection works its hidden way. A determined band of students—conscious that secret associations are everywhere in progress and only wait an inspiriting example to declare themselves—resolve to surprise the Belvedere, the palace of the terrible Grand Duke.

There is one of these conspirators, a youth of ardent temperament and enthusiastic mind, who, weakened by the intense studies, which for the Polish youth had the attraction of being forbidden, has been so excited by the importance of the undertaking, that his mind wanders a little. His brethren judge it fit to remove him to a distance; but, before his departure, he has dropped a word, perhaps a monosyl-

lable or two, which have aroused suspicion: he is watched.

After a fatiguing journey, he is detained in the town of —— by his increasing malady. There is a private mark upon his passport, which points out to the police authorities that they are to keep a vigilant eye upon him. As his illness gains ground, he lets fall another word or two in the delirium of fever.

This is reported to the Baron Bamberg, who presides over that department, and the Baron Bamberg dispatches one of his cleverest agents—our old friend Dimitri—who has profited by his master's ruin, and the pickings which his profusion afforded, to obtain his liberty and enter the police, in which he has risen so rapidly that he has already the mission to report upon his patron, Bamberg.

Dimitri, hearing that the sick youth was becoming alarmed, and anxious for a Romish priest, unhesitatingly personated that character. He led his victim artfully to confess, and, by means of confession, extorted from him all the details of the conspiracy which no tortures would have extracted from his lips. It was late on the 27th of November that he received this confession; the 29th was the night fixed for the attack of the Belvedere.

Now Dimitri had profited sufficiently by the instructions of his master to know that so important a piece of information would suffice to make a man's fortune, and that his chief would be sure to forward it as his own discovery. He therefore resolved to dissemble, and, having declared that he could extract nothing from the patient, he walked beyond the town gate, taking with him the pass of some trader which was lying ready signed.

He made an agreement with a nobleman's servant taking his caleche to Warsaw, on condition that he would not linger on the road; and he took his seat inside. This servant, who after a few stations on the road became deeply inebriated, had a companion. The dignity of Dimitri, who was now a Chinovnik, or man of rank, was somewhat hurt when the drunken servant came into the coach, and was assisted into it by a dapper little man, in whom, not much to his satisfaction, he recognized our old friend, Bob Bridle.

Bob had grown older, and looked care-worn. He was now poor, and was making his way slowly westward. It was his intention to seek service at Warsaw, and then go further with his earnings, when their amount should enable him to do so. His apparel was very seedy; the nap was all brushed off his rusty hat, and his coat was very threadbare; but there was not a button wanting or a hole discernible. His neckerchief was still very white, his buckskins clean, his tops spotless, and his boots bright—though, alas! now sadly patched. All his worldly gear he carried in a handkerchief—a cravat, a shirt, a pair of bootlegs with worn-out feet, his pipe and bible, his veterinary instruments, and the hoof and fetlock of his poor horse, Lucifer.

It was some time before Bob recognized, or chose to recognize, Dimitri, but when he did, he said in his determined manner:

"I've a long account to settle—a bone to pick with you."

"I hope you know," replied Dimitri, who was far from feeling comfortable at this announcement, "that I am a Chinovnik now?"

"I know that you are a d—n rascal, unless you've altered very much," said Bob; and then, as if a

thought suddenly occurred to him, he appeared not only to cool down, but there was almost a merry twinkle in the corner of his grey eye. After a while, he observed:

"It was a shameful trick of you to hocus my drink that ere time in St. Petersburg."

"That, upon my honour, is a mistake," replied Dimitri, reflecting that he wished he could dispose of the other expected charges as easily. "There was nothing the matter with the drink except that it was strong."

"Then how warn't you drunk? You soaked in more than I did."

"That," replied Dimitri, "arose from my having a stronger head."

"Did it?" said Bob. "Then look you; my friend there, as is three sheets in the wind, has made me free of the brandy-bottle; now I leave you the option of the choice either to have the strength of it tried by drinking glass for glass with me like a jovial fellow, or by having it punched, as I will otherways do for you upon the spot."

Here Bob first tucked his sleeves up in a workmanlike manner, and then drew forth a huge bottle from the company of several others under the seat.

The earth and water of the Scythian ambassadors were not more significant. Dimitri knew the dexterity and resolution of the groom; he therefore chose the alternative of the brandy, resolved at the town of ——, where he was known, to call for assistance before he could be affected by its quantity. So, holding out his hand for the cup, he said blandly:

"Come come, here's to your health!"

"Don't forget me," hiccupped the other servant.

"That is right," said Bob; "but you must take

two thimblefuls to start fair. Here is mine to you, Dimitri. Now it's yours to follow suit."

The third dram, elevating Dimitri's spirits, led him to imagine that he should really outdrink the groom, who was perhaps already half intoxicated, and therefore, as Bob at certain intervals continued to drink, he drank boldly after him; but he had strangely miscalculated, for in a little while he began to hold out his cup, and ask in a maudlin tone for liquor.

Bob Bridle now gave him the bottle, which he lifted occasionally to his lips, until completely intoxicated, with a sort of jeer of defiance as the groom affected to do the same.

"Now, my friend," said Bob. "If you ain't fuddled then no three-year old never started for the Darby." But to make security doubly sure, he took him by the throat, and putting the bottle to his mouth, by judiciously relinquishing and then resuming his hold, he made him swallow an additional quantity, just as he had been in the habit of physicking a horse.

"That's it, my hearty!" said Bob. "It goes down like mother's milk—don't it?"

Dimitri was by this time in a state of utter insensibility, and Bob, quietly drawing from his little stock a pair of scissors, took his head between his knees, and saying: "This is tit for tat," first clipped off his moustachios, then his hair.

"You may boast," continued the groom, "that you have been clipped with the same scissors as I used to poor Lucifer—may the turf lie lightly on him! as they say, which he went so lightly over. I don't say that your head is very smooth, but then you can go to the barber's and get shaved clean when you are sober."

By this time they had reached the town of ——, where Dimitri, well known to the police authorities, had all along proposed to himself to give the groom into custody.

But Bob too was acquainted with the town, and, making the post-driver, whom liquor had rendered complaisant, wait before he proceeded to the station, beside the dead wall of a vast building, he now pinned Dimitri up in an old table-cloth, in which some eatables had been enveloped, and which he discovered under the seat, and then, under pretext of conveying him to his friends, upraised him on his shoulders.

Dimitri was a small man, but still he was double the bulk of Bob, and therefore to see him borne away on his shoulders reminded one of the big larvæ, which may be seen carried by the little ants when you disturb their hillocks.

Bob disappeared with his burthen behind the angle of the building, which was the foundling hospital.

There is a sort of cage in a niche of the wall, into which unfortunate infants abandoned by their parents are placed; the bell is then rung, and the cage revolves, so that the child is received without the depositor being seen.

Into this receptacle, which Bob called a dumb-waiter, he crammed the inert body of the drunken Dimitri, doubling up the legs and bending the neck to enable him to get it in; and then ringing the bell when he had succeeded in his task.

"Now, if you havn't got a pretty boy in that ere establishment, then I don't know the use of a currycomb," and, with this reflection, Bob left him to his fate, and proceeded forthwith to Warsaw.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Princess of Lowicz returned from the church of the Holy Cross, has been this hour closeted with the Grand Duke: neglecting her usual prudence, she has intruded too rashly on his humour. His voice is heard from without by his immediate confidants like that of a wild beast roaring in its den. While the terrible tempest of passion is raging, the crash of mirrors, clocks, and costly vases resounds as he dashes them in fragments, and the howl of savage and exulting rage, rising above the din, blanches the very cheeks of those whose duty keeps them in such dangerous vicinity; and, frequent as is the recurrence of these scenes, makes them tremble for the frail, delicate, and suffering wife, exposed to the tempestuous madness of her ferocious Lord.

At length exhaustion, or at least utter silence, follows rage, and then her soft clear voice raises its gentle accents, like the beautiful notes of a bird carolling to greet the sunshine, when the roar of the winds is suddenly hushed, and the black thunder-clouds open after speeding their tumultuous bolts—that voice, which must be like an angel's, if its soothing melody, poured forth in life-long intercession for mercy, suffice to such similitude.

The exquisite tact derived from long experience has taught her where to stay her prayer; but, at times, as now, the urgency of the occasion leads her to pass these shadowy bounds. Her intercession now is in favour of those victims whom she has unwillingly deluded; for she had written of Isaakoff's death, and assured them that all recollection of their flight was buried with him. She clasps her husband's knees. Roused into fury by this importunity, he pushes her back with brutal violence, and his heavy spurred boot tramps on the floor, as he hurries to the door and throws it open. All is over—her appeal has failed!

Passion chokes his voice:—he utters an inarticulate sound, but those who are waiting without, in doubt as to who is called, start up together. All these terrible men, at whose very name the inhabitants of Warsaw tremble, stand up in terror in their turn, exactly in the position of soldiers under the drill sergeant's eye—Legendre and Sass, Rosniecki and Lubovidski. He beckons to the police-master; the rest stand back.

"To-morrow, to-morrow, at break of day," said the Grand Duke, still full of the subject which had aroused his wrath—"those women shall be forwarded to St. Petersburg—ay if they were wife or daughter to the citizen king! The husband—I have defiled his mother!—stirs not till my imperial brother's will be known. How goes it in the city?"

"Still quiet, your Highness; but they continue to whisper and discuss these western revolutions."

"I will muzzle them," said Constantine. Hitherto I have ruled them like King Log, they shall now find me King Stork. Have you detected many fresh malcontents since morning?"

"Our united lists mark out two hundred and seventeen persons, against whom there is more or less suspicion of disaffection, and whom it is therefore wise to incarcerate;—there are seven and twenty in the category B. whom it might be well, if your Imperial Highness judges fit, to transfer to Russia for example sake."

"If I judge fit!—I will bridle the tongues of these Poles, I will subdue their rebellious thoughts, if I transplant them all, old men and sucking babes, to the Siberian wastes, and fill their villages with Russians."

* * * * *

"These are stirring times," said Sass—"we sleep on a volcano, on a powder-mine."

"Pooh! pooh!" said Rosniecki, "there is no danger from the powder-mine, so we do not fall asleep and let a candle drop into it."

"Sleep!" said Le Gendre, "I have not eaten, drunk, or slept in comfort these two days. I wish his Imperial Highness would call me—I dare not go; I have hardly breakfasted, and I must hear the reports of thirty of our spies before I dine. Woe, woe, woe, to these turbulent Poles for it!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

MORNING dawns on a scene of terror on the last day of November. The gallant band of devoted students have surprised the jealously-watched palace of the Belvedere. The Grand Duke Constantine has barely escaped with life; but how could Providence have denied that boon to the prayer of his gentle Duchess!

The populace has risen—whole regiments have declared in favour of the nation, others maintain neutrality—the people take a terrible revenge. Of the agents of oppression who yesterday crowded the Grand Duke's antechambers, or stalked along, inspiring dread and horror, one and all have either fled, concealed themselves, or perished. Le Gendre and Sass lie cold and mangled — Lubovidski pierced with thirteen wounds.

The resolution of the Grand Duke Constantine is quelled for ever. There is something of the courage of the pitted wolf, with its strong jaws and pointed fangs, about all his family. They are not people to be scared away by squibs, or turned aside one hair's-breadth from their path by threats or impending dangers. Their bite is terrible whilst still at large; but, once fairly *collared*, their game deserts them, and

they yield to fate and humiliation with Oriental resignation. Paul bowed to his assassins, so Alexander to Napoleon's conquering arms, and Constantine to the revolted Poles.

If there be no Ferdinand, no Charles X, and no Don Miguel in their line, there has been no Sardanapalus, no Marc Antony, perishing amid the wreck of his fortunes, no Richard II expiring on the bodies of the murderers whom he had slain, no Richard III dying sword in hand upon the bloody field that saw the crown snatched from his brow.

The prisons are broken into, and thus Mattheus is released from the arrest under which he has been placed for his neglect of duty. He has joined those who have delivered him. Regardless of the cold November wind, he throws off his soldier's great coat, and, bare-headed, with sleeves upturned, displaying the gigantic proportions of his sinewy arms—he snatches up a musket in one hand, and in the other the national Muscovite axe.

These insurgents are led by one of the conspirators, a youth of the cadet-school, who owes his authority over them to the successful hardihood with which his fellow-students have taken the first eventful step by surprising the Grand Duke.

Mattheus is received with eagerness as a liberated victim, besides which the perfection of his Polish accent does not allow them to suspect that he is Russian. Everything that meets his eye and ear on this unexpected deliverance tends to impress him with a belief—for which recent events in Western Europe have prepared him—that this is not revolt, but revolution; and so he passes from sullen desperation to a state of hope, rapturous, though still alloyed.

Amidst this motley crowd he presses ardently forward. It is now no longer the courage of despair, as in the rising of his native village, which nerves his mighty arm, for he is inspired by the hope of his companions, as they advance to the cadence of patriotic hymns, discordantly mingled with enthusiastic cheers and savage cries of vengeance; and in his turn he inspires them to fresh acts of daring by the example of his confident and earnest resolution.

Wherever the leader of this band—the youthful student—points with his sword, Mattheus moves forward, not with the fitful effervescent valour of the excited crowd, but at a calm, measured, almost stately, pace, which speaks inspiritingly to the beholders his own unshakeable confidence of success, and impresses them with its fatality. If he be not indeed foremost when it makes a rush, wherever resistance stays its march, he is seen to advance with the slow, calm certainty of the shadow on a dial. There is about him—and he infuses into others—a conviction of predestined triumph.

And it is true that, exposed to their full brunt, both lead and steel leave him unscathed. The insurgents have reached a picquet which bars their passage, and, heedless of their warning to stand back, Mattheus advances with unruffled serenity up to the levelled muskets of the soldiers, wavering between patriotism and fidelity, and thus, at the moment that their fingers are upon the trigger, he determines them to join the people!

The mob, swollen by the fraternising soldiery, and gathering numbers as it goes, directs its course towards another post; but here, intrenched behind a hurriedly-erected barricade of sledges, benches, and

overturned waggons, a strong detachment defends this important point. A hasty volley brings the head of the advancing column to a full pause, as it debouches from the lane. It is but for a moment: for the maddened crowd rush only the more fiercely to the assault. But the fire is close and hot—the mob turns back more rapidly than it pressed forward. The smoke clears away, and shows only—amidst the dead and dying—two of the assailants who have not fled—their leader, the student, and Mattheus. The former though wounded, is still erect, and cheering on his disheartened followers with cap in hand, and the other uninjured and stalking resolutely up to the defences, from behind which peep the heads of the soldiery and streams their murderous fire ; but no bullet strikes this man of destiny, though he has reached the barrier, though, within a few feet of the blazing muzzles of their guns, he hews away with his mighty axe at the barricade, and then, with the strength of Sampson, tears it piece-meal!

The strange spectacle of this isolated man, displaying the power of a giant in his anxiety to remove the barrier which divides him from a multitude of armed and angry foes, inspires his enemies with a superstitious dread, his partizans with enthusiastic admiration. The student, with his maimed leg, advances generously to his support alone. The crowd, with a terrific outcry, rush to the barricade. It is stormed—it is taken,—its defenders writhe and expire beneath the steel of the victorious mob.

This conquest is scarcely achieved, when a vehicle dashes up the street in the distance, already followed by the cry of fierce pursuers. The fugitives evidently

thought this point still occupied by the government troops: they perceive their mistake too late; they are arrested by the victors, and recognized as Russians. The savage captors, begrimed with blood and powder, gather round them, when one of their fleet-limbed pursuers gasps out breathlessly that there is amongst them one of Lubovidski's (the police-master's) people. Their fate, dubious before, now seems inevitably sealed: it is only with the utmost effort that the student can stay the arms of his followers for a moment—and only by echoing death to their vociferous shouts of death.

"Yes, death, my brethren, to Lubovidski's agent; but let us learn which is he."

The crowd suspends its vengeance for a while. The pale and trembling prisoners are three in number. One wears the caftan of a coachman, the other two are wrapped in the shubes of civilians; but in the vehicle are found a police uniform which has been thrown aside, and a mass of papers, which confirm the accusation of their pursuer that one of them has been recognised by the mob from which he fled.

"Put to death, if you will, the agent of the infamous Lubovidski; but whoever lifts a hand against the other two, I fell to the earth," said the student.

"They are Russians!" shout the bystanders.

"The good of all countries are brethren!" exclaimed Mattheus. "Lubovidski himself was a Pole and a traitor—these may be Russians and victims."

"It is plain," said one of the insurgents, holding up the uniform, "that this does not fit the tall one, so it must be the other."

At this observation all eyes were turned on the

shorter of the two personages enveloped in their shubes, who was evidently the police-officer, the third being a menial.

"Wretched man!" said the student, still covering him with his sword, "prepare to die! I cannot save thee from the death thy many crimes deserve."

"Oh, oh, your merciful nobility!" shrieked the victim, falling prostrate, "I am nothing but a miserable slave; that is my master, the Colonel of Police, who has put on my caftan."

"Oh, your Excellency," artfully replied he in the garb of the coachman, addressing the man in the shube, "I must speak out," and then turning to the mob, "know, worthy gentlemen, that it is true that he did change garments with me from top to toe; but, thinking the danger past, he was making me take back my caftan to go into the presence of the Grand Duke in his own hat and shube."

"Oh, do not believe him; look! look!" said the disguised varlet, throwing off his shube, and showing the coarse clothing of a serf beneath it. "I am his slave!"

But this did not convince the crowd, who were prepared for it by the explanation given by the other; and, although both were lividly pale, the haggard eye and chattering teeth of the last speaker inclined their opinion against him.

"That is my master, the Police Colonel; I am a serf, though he denies it," reiterated the master disguised in the caftan.

"I!" said the wretched slave, slipping off his under garment, and leaving it in a rude hand which had seized him impatiently, "oh, in God's name! gentlemen, do not believe him—look only here—look at

the gap left by a tooth which he kicked out—look at these hands horny with labour—look at these scars upon my shoulders—can he show any upon his?"

These deeply indented marks of the lash were indeed a terrible refutation. How readily the master would then have given all the orders and medals which had cost him such a world of troublesome infamy to gain, to have had these ignominious stripes to show! He fell in abject terror, clasping the student's knees.

"Oh, mercy! mercy! grant me only one day's life, and I will lead you to capture my chief!"

During this time, the tallest of the three captives remained muffled up in his shube, in the custody of several of the crowd.

"If," said one of his guards, a fierce old rebel, pointing with his cocked pistol at the kneeling man, "if he only belongs to the Colonel Samoilov's office, I must dip my own hand in his heart's blood!"

"My friend," whispered the tall prisoner, pointing to his fellow-captive, as he clasped the student's knees, "*that is Colonel Samoilov.*"

At these words the old man, who had some deadly wrong to revenge, clapped his pistol to the Colonel's head, and, blowing his skull in pieces, stopped short his revelations.

"Come," said Mattheus, to the disguised slave, "this is the hour of freedom, take up some weapon, and follow us."

"Come!" shouted some of the mob.

At this invitation, the slave seemed to recover from his terror;—he turned to assure himself that his tyrant was dead, and then an intense ferocity gathered in his aspect. He placed his foot upon the neck of

the corpse, and this action brought instantly to the recollection of Mattheus, where he had seen the vaguely-remembered features both of the dead master and of the savagely exulting slave. It was at the post-house of Strelna, where the Chinovnik so cruelly maltreated the poor ostler, and it was evidently in horrible mimicry of what he had endured that he now retaliated on his Lord's remains.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Before the mob proceeds, it is necessary to provide for the defence of the important post they have conquered, and to occupy it with a strong detachment. The student, now borne aloft in the arms of the insurgents, designates Mattheus as a fitting leader of this band; and the bystanders, full of admiration for his prodigious strength and dauntless intrepidity, adopt this suggestion and clamorously ratify his choice. Mattheus, fatigued and exhausted, accepts because aware that from this central spot he is most likely in the universal confusion which prevails, to hear something of the fate of those about whom he is in such cruel anxiety.

Within the house adjoining the barricade, first turned into a guard-house by the military, and now occupied by the victors, is confined the tallest of the three Russians. There was nothing against him but the fact that he was attempting to escape, and the company in which he was found, and he has been snatched by the energetic interposition of the student from the horrible fate of his companion.

From the contradictory accounts of those who had pursued the vehicle in which the fugitives were escaping, Mattheus was led to believe that they could have

afforded him the intelligence he was so intensely desirous of obtaining; but the liberated slave had moved on with the bulk of the crowd, and there remained, therefore, only the prisoner within to interrogate. Locking the door after him, to keep out his merciless and excited followers, over whom he held but slight control, he went in to his captive.

When the prisoner turned on his entrance, both started back, for, thus meeting face to face out of the wild turmoil of the surrounding mob, the prisoner knew Mattheus, and Mattheus recognised the Prince Isaakoff, pale, haggard, bespattered with the brains and sprinkled with the blood of his late companion. Isaakoff, thus suddenly confronted with his armed slave, raised his hands to his eyes with a shudder, as he exclaimed:

"Mattvei!"

"My Lord," replied Mattheus with mechanical deference, and then he added in a tone of bitter derision. "Yes, *my Lord*, as in punishment for thy sins Heaven made thee, Ivan Ivanovitch!—though now, in retribution of thy crimes, thou art given over to me."

"Mattvei!" said the Prince still self-possessed in all his terror, and not unmindful of the impression of his words, "Mattvei! what wouldst thou have me do?"

"Prepare to die," replied Mattheus sternly, as he cocked his musket. "The time for resignation is past, so is the hour for pity. Over the wide world the slave is trampling on his fetters, tyranny is withering, thrones are crumbling—Mercy has become guilt—the exterminating angel is abroad!"

And at this moment several rude husky voices were heard without, singing in chorus, in terrible corroboration of these words, the first snatches of a song improvised by some mob poet, which they were learning to repeat.

Poland, old Poland! has arisen from her sleep,—
From her sorrow and pain,—
From her long degradation,—
Not to pardon and weep
But to pay back again,
The tears of long years, by a like desolation!

And then another clearer voice sang in an accent less savage but not less enthusiastic,

Hurrah! for the cock that heralds the morn,
Of Liberty's birth and of freedom's dawn!
The wide earth is waking,
And tyrants are quaking,
Thrones totter and rock,
At the crow of the cock,
For its broad day is gloriously breaking!

Mattheus saying, "Hearest thou?" listened with superstitious earnestness to this augury; but, though his brow was radiant, the severity of his contracted lip, which Isaakoff watched with breathless interest, was not the less appalling for this exaltation.

"Mattvei!" said the Prince, abjectly clasping the knees of his late serf, "see how thou triumphest! Was ever yet abasement such as thou beholdest? The Lord imploring of his serf a few brief days of life—the Lord of ruined, broken fortunes, begging a wretched life of him, whose fathers ate of his forefathers' bread! He whose sire fostered thee, imploring mercy of thee whom that sire fostered, for his

unhappy son! Bethink thee that I am ruined and an outcast. Thou wilt not kill me?"

"*I* will not kill thee," replied Mattheus. "Hark! there are thirty pikes without." And again the song of the insurgents broke upon their ear.

> Strike in the name,
> Of her wrongs and her shame!
> Let not one,
> Now the strife is begun,
> Live to see the declining sun
> Go down to its rest and her justice undone!

It was interrupted by their knocking loudly at the door, and they were heard shouting, "Open Captain! open brother! we have discovered a traitor in the prisoner."

"Good God!" said the Prince. "Hear them! not to save me is to kill me—to let murder be done upon me is to murder me. In the name of him, who was to you a father, in the name of that fraternity—for thus far we are brothers—I charge you."

And again the voices of the singers drowned his voice, as they thundered out with unconscious but startling appositeness,

> If all men be brothers,
> The deeds of the Russ
> Make his murderous brotherhood
> Cain's brotherhood for us;
> So pour his black blood out,
> And strike—for 'tis plain
> That with every Russian we strike down a Cain.

"Oh God! oh God!" said the Prince, "so happy and so hardened to the voice of misery! In another hour thou wilt be with thy wife and sister. I

saw them rescued at the gate. Oh save me, Mattvei!"

"You saw them rescued!" exclaimed Mattheus, with exulting joy.

"Open! open! open!" shout the mob without.

"Oh! save me!"

"Hark!" replied Mattheus, "my wrath is gone. I may forgive, but I cannot save thee. The mission of the slave in these days of retribution is not to hesitate, but to strike. The sword may not disobey the hand that wields it, unless it would be cast aside; nor we the Lord whose instruments we are."

"Open! open!" roar the mob, "man of the red axe! be quick with thy questions as with thy blows! Open! here is one who can identify the prisoner."

"I come," replied Mattheus.

"Mattvei Mattveitch! in *his* name, mercy! Hast thou forgotten that grey-headed man, who was to thee more than to me a father?"

"Call not upon that name!" said Matthew sternly.

"Oh, I will bid him witness with my dying voice! Think only if he stood before us, and saw his only son tracked by these hell-hounds, and thee still remorseless."

Mattheus replied not, but he was deeply moved by this appeal.

"If I am known," continued the Prince, "I perish! Hark to that tramp! It is a neutral regiment marching out to join the Grand-Duke. Save me, Mattvei, let me descend by that window!"

It must be explained that the apartment in which the prisoner was confined looked out on a lane at the back, which was utterly deserted.

"It is too high, you cannot leap into the paved street."

"Oh Mattvei, my more than brother, I am saved!" exclaimed the Prince, attempting to throw his arms around his neck.

"Back!" said Mattheus, with a stern expression of disgust. "That embrace would be contamination. Hark! they knock without—their impatience grows to anger. I am not in my guilty weakness proof against the venerable image which thou hast invoked. So go—begone in peace, and, remembering thy infamy and cruelty, repent."

At this moment redoubled knocks were heard outside.

"Open! open! we know thy prisoner! We will not be delayed!" shout the impatient partisans.

"Quick! put thy foot on this ledge, hold on by the stock of this musket and let thyself drop gently." And Mattheus grasped with conscious strength the other extremity of the piece by which the Prince supported his whole weight.

Isaakoff measured with a rapid glance the distance which remained to the ground. It was about seven feet, he was sure that he could leap it without injury. He looked upwards, the broad herculean chest of Mattheus was protruding from the window, and the barrel of the musket was imprudently directed towards him, as he held it to insure the prisoner's safe descent. He had forgotten to uncock it. The Prince, more observant, with diabolical ingratitude pulled the trigger, discharging the contents of the musket into his saviour's body, and then dropped nimbly into the street, the musket clattering after him.

Mattheus, shot through the heart, staggered back into the apartment.

A tremendous cheer from the mob announced some fresh success, and, as it ceased, these words rang on his dying ear:

> All hail to the cock of Gaul!
> He heralds a light
> Which shall never know night,
> Now it streams through the wide world for all.

As his brain reeled, as the absorbing thoughts of life chasing each other incoherently flashed through it in his agony—the images of his wife and sister, the triumph of freedom, and the fancied curse upon his people—it would seem as if he expired with the conviction, that he was the victim of its fatality, but the last, for there rose a faint smile of exultation to his lips, and then, the slave Mattheus, the fated and hereditary bondsman, was free; for, muttering, "The doom.... the doom upon the race of Sur!" he fell upon the floor stark dead.

Isaakoff judged more prophetically than the song, which, bringing a last smile to his victim's lips, was only painting there the fallacious hope of a whole nation; for, having at this instant joined the faithful regiment marching out by capitulation to follow the Grand-Duke, he observed to its commander, "If these Poles trust in the Gallic cock, they will find it become so domestic a dunghill bird, that it will not even give our Emperor the pretext of eating it trussed and truffled."

Meanwhile the followers of Mattheus were knocking outrageously without and threatening to burst the door, when the report of the fatal musket was heard.

"Hurrah! he has killed another traitor! Hurrah for Poland!"

> Strike! strike
> For if every blow
> Were to pay back a thousand te[illegible]
> *Their* blood must flow,
> And the weary pike
> Must ply for a thousand years!

Then, grounding their weapons in savage cadence, there followed an interval of expectation and of silence.

"Open, brother!—Open! open Captain!—You are called for. Open, man of the red axe!"

Still no answer. At length they burst the door, and find him prostrate. He has fallen with his limbs stiff and rigid, like an uprooted tree. His chest is blackened by the powder, his shirt burning like tinder, ignited by the charge, and the hot blood is bubbling out of a large, hideous wound in the region of the heart!

Even the crowd is awed by this sad spectacle; but the emotion—like all other emotions with the multitude—passes rapidly.

"It is a pity," said one, "that so strong, so valiant, he let himself be taken by surprise!"

"Lay him here," observed another, "and let us breathe a prayer over him. He died for Poland!"

"There are many more will die like him," replied a sturdy insurgent. "Every man of us will be thus or free."

> Each son of Poland
> Will live for her glory,
> Or lie on her battle fields,
> Cold, stiff and gory!

"Hurrah for Poland!" shout the bystanders, and then the corpse might have been speedily abandoned to its fate, but for the arrival of some new comers. They bring with them two women rescued at the city gate, as they were being conveyed to the Grand Duke's quarters, and they have already led them into the room before they can make their question heard, as they ask for their Captain; so vociferous have the excited spectators become, as they drown the last momentary feeling of regret in the wild and discordant merriment of their song.

Shed not a tear
On grave or bier,
For Freedom—the new born—is nursing here!
And what death-cry is unmeet, so that Freedom it greet?
Or who would not spread his own winding sheet
To deck its joyful cradle?

"This way, this way, ladies," said one of the rude conductors of these two females. "Keep heart; though we be disarrayed and stained with blood a little, we are rough but honest men. Lord love you, we would not hurt you! Nor these either, they are good and true men too, and merry withal as you may hear. Where is our captain?"

But again the question is only answered by the last clamorous shout of the chorus.

Let no alloy
Our mirth destroy,
Or cloud the course of our triumph and joy!

Then, these voices hush into comparative silence, and he asks again:

"Where is our Captain?"

Some of the crowd step aside, and, pointing to the body, expose it to the full view of the two women—Blanche and Nadeshta!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

PROFITING by the successful insurrection, the Marquis and Marchioness de St. Armand and Blanche returned to France and live in utter retirement—the wife and sister of Mattheus still in that mourning which probably they will never lay aside.

Bob Bridle is with them. He still speaks with emotion of the revolt of the Bialoe Darevnia as having lost therein his favourite Lucifer, whose hoof he has had shod with a silver racing plate. Of the Polish revolution he has been merely heard to observe, with a grave shake of the head, "that it was a sad and unprofitable business for every one;" and when asked whether he had lost anything by it, replies, "his Bible and his pipe," and drops the subject.

Anna Obrasoff resides in Italy, and has married the Lieutenant Alexius, who, sold by his Tcherkess master to a Turkish merchant, was at length conveyed to Constantinople.

The Prince Isaakoff is still in the police service, employed on foreign stations, and coupled with the detested Baron Bamberg.

Baron Bamberg has recently, however, been made a Russian councillor of state, and has offered in the

German papers to give twenty thousand roubles to any one who will furnish him with proof that the Emperor Paul died of anything but apoplexy. No one has accepted his challenge, which will be worth something to him.

The Prince Isaakoff has met with a slight mishap. He was rather successful in pigeoning a nephew of Sir Thomas Blunt's, who forthwith came over, and pinning the hand of his relative's dear friend to the table with a steel fork, discovered the fraudulent card beneath it. He is now at Baden Baden, and wears his arm in a sling *from the consequences of a duel.*

Vasili Petrovitch still prospers in his business, and Katinka has returned to him; but the relations of husband and wife are singularly changed; for Vasili instead of being absolute master at home, is now her very humble servant; and the old aunt is banished to the kitchen. Katinka has become quite independent in her movements, and daily receives some of her police acquaintances, whose rank makes the old trader play a very insignificant part at his own table. Somehow or other, however, their protection is incessantly needed, and proves a very serious drain upon his profits. He is now offering a large sum to escape appointment to some high civic office—an infliction with which he is threatened.

The Grand Duke Constantine took no active part in the campaign which followed his expulsion from Warsaw. With his usual originality, he rubbed his hands with delight at all the early reverses of the Russian armies.

"Since you would go to war, spoiling uniforms and destroying discipline," said he, "I am very glad they have licked you. I knew they would. They

are my own children. *I* disciplined, *I* formed them."

The Princess of Lowicz, to whom this deprivation of power was a great relief, now turned all her solicitude towards watching her rude Constantine, painfully conscious of the hatred and the jealousies that menaced him.

There is said to have been one person to whom she always entertained an instinctive aversion—the Count Orloff, to whom public rumour attributed several important deaths—one at least of which, that of the Emperor Alexander, was assuredly natural. Perhaps the report had gained ground, because the murder of two princes was reckoned in the brief annals of his house.

Orloff seated himself at the same table with Diebitsch at Pultusk. Diebitsch died in horrible agony of sudden cholera. From Pultusk, Orloff came to Minsk, and ate with the Grand-Duke Constantine, who was seized with the same pains as he rose from his repast, and died in the same manner as Diebitsch.

The Duchess, adopting the popular belief that her husband had been poisoned, lingered not long after him; and, broken-hearted at the contumely and injustice with which Nicholas treated her, expired with the name of Constantine upon her lips—the only lips that had ever breathed that name with affection.

Constantine had left to his beloved wife all his possessions. Nicholas would not allow her to inherit them; the widowed princess was indebted many thousand pounds, all spent in her uncalculating charities. When she died, the creditors came upon her aged father, the old Grudzinski. He went to

St. Petersburg to claim the heritage of his daughter; he was not even vouchsafed an answer by the Emperor, and returned to his humble home to die in misery.

The creditors of the Grudzinski family in Prussian Poland have, however, at length attacked the Emperor Nicholas before the Courts of Berlin, and whilst these volumes are going through the press, have caused the seals of justice to be set upon the palace, his private property in Berlin.

THE END.

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